BOY SCOUTS

MYSTERIOUS SIGNAL

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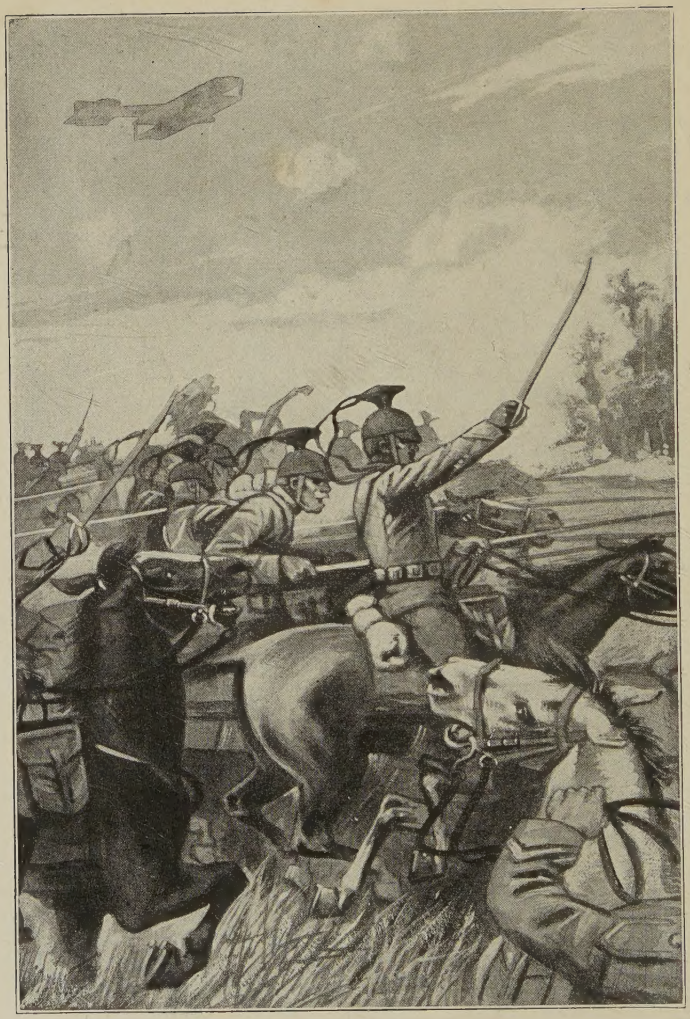

The Forces Finished a Brilliant Attack

BOY SCOUTS
MYSTERIOUS SIGNAL

OR

Perils of the Black Bear Patrol

BY

G. HARVEY RALPHSON

MADE IN U. S. A

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Boy Scouts Mysterious Signal

Or

Perils of the Black-Bear Patrol

AN UNWILLING RECRUIT

CHAPTER I

"But I say it's not fair!" cried a red-headed lad, drawing himself up to his full height. "You're not playing fair with us!"

"Ach, it is not so!" protested the one to whom the boy spoke. "We find you an enemy in our city, and you must take the consequences!"

"Just because you wear an officer's uniform," retorted the boy, beginning to lose his temper and gazing fearlessly into the pale blue eyes of the other, "is no sign you know more than we do. You may think that helmet and those stripes on your arm give you more brains than the common run of people, but it isn't so! I say I protest!"

"And much good your protest may do you at this time and place," was the calm answer. Then, drawing his eyebrows down until the blue eyes were scarcely able to peer beneath them, he continued: "I, Heinrich von Liebknecht, Captain in His Imperial Majesty's army in command of a detachment sent forward to capture this city, have decided that it is better that you remain with us. There is nothing more to say."

"But there is a great deal more to say!" stormed the boy.

"Jimmie," cautioned another lad, stepping forward and laying a hand on the arm of the red-headed boy, "perhaps it would be better to say no more just at this time. There must be some way out of this."

"Silence!" commanded the man who had called himself von Liebknecht. "The decision has been made. I leave you now, but will return in a few moments. By that time you will have said farewell to your friends and be ready to accompany me for service under the Kaiser!"

The lad addressed as Jimmie could scarcely restrain a sneer as the other finished speaking. His contempt was unbounded, and he did not seem to be making any great effort to conceal his emotion.

Just as the door was closing behind the departing man Jimmie permitted himself to wrinkle his freckled nose in that direction and accompanied the gesture with a motion indicative of great disgust and contempt well known to many.

The scene was one unusual in the extreme. Four young boys were standing in a room from which the ceiling had been partly removed by an exploding shell from a cannon. They were in one of the houses that had only partly escaped destruction during the bombardment of Peremysl by the Germans on that memorable first day of June, 1915.

Three of the boys were about eighteen years of age and wore the well-known uniforms of the Boy Scouts of America. The eldest, Ned Nestor, was slightly older than the others and wore insignia that denoted his rank as patrol leader of the Wolf Patrol, New York City.

Jack Bosworth and Harry Stevens stood beside Ned, their uniforms slightly the worse for wear, due to the extremely active experiences they had just undergone. These boys were members of the Black Bear Patrol of New York City, and were fast friends of Ned Nestor and his red-headed chum, Jimmie McGraw, the fourth member of the group.

Just now Jimmie was not wearing the Boy

Scout uniform. Instead he was dressed in the uniform of a Russian Cossack, and this was the immediate reason for the controversy that had arisen between the boy and the German officer. Those of our readers who have followed the adventures of the boys as related in previous volumes of this series, and particularly that entitled "Boy Scouts with the Cossacks, or Poland Recaptured," will at once recall the exciting circumstances that resulted in Jimmie's donning the Cossack uniform and the reason for the presence of the four boys in Peremysl at this time.

Jimmie seemed to be too much overcome by his emotion at what he considered rank injustice to be able to carry on rational conversation.

"I tell you, Ned," he sputtered, "just because I happen to have on some clothes a little different from others they needn't think I'm any different myself! I'll fix his clock, all right!"

"Don't forget about using slang, Jimmie!" cautioned Ned, half laughing. "But you see the German officer, von Liebknecht, is really more than a little bit right at that."

"How's that?" inquired Jimmie in astonishment.

"They say clothes don't make the man," re-

plied Ned, "but in a great many cases clothes are like one's reputation—they play an important part in other people's estimate of us. In this case, for instance, the Germans have just captured this city from the Russians. You are discovered wearing a Russian Cossack uniform, and they naturally and almost excusably conclude that the wearer of the uniform is a subject of the country it represents."

"Oh, I see," slowly replied the lad, nodding his red head.

"Yes, Jimmie," put in Harry Stevens, "you see it pays to 'Be Prepared,' just as our motto says. We never can tell just when we'll be required to depend upon our reputation or our uniform for a favorable opinion from those who see us or hear of us."

"That's all very well," interrupted Jack Bosworth, "but how are we to get Jimmie out of this predicament? General or Captain von Liebknecht seems to think that he's going to make a German soldier out of Jimmie just to keep him out of harm's way, and I don't like it."

"Perhaps we can find some of the other uniforms or clothes of some sort for Jimmie to change into," suggested Harry eagerly.

Ned shook his head in a despondent manner.

"I'm afraid that wouldn't work, boys," he

said presently. "We would only be caught at it and all tried for spies, and maybe find ourselves in a worse predicament than we now are. Perhaps the German officer will listen to reason when he returns."

"Yes," scorned Jimmie. "Perhaps the sun will shine at midnight, or water will start running uphill, or something like that will happen!"

"You don't seem to have much faith in the German ability to change the mind?" inquired Jack. "Maybe this fellow'll be different."

"No, sir!" pursued Jimmie gloomily. "The average German is a pretty decent fellow in a great many ways, but when it comes to changing his mind—why, it 'can't be did,' because it's impossible."

"Hush!" commanded Ned. "Here he comes. I'll talk to him."

But, though Ned endeavored by every art of conversation at his command to influence the German Captain to change his mind, that individual insisted that since Jimmie had been found in the captured city wearing the uniform of a Russian Cossack he must be treated as one. The only alternative he would admit was that Jimmie must give evidence of his claim that he was not a Russian by enlisting in the German army.

"So," decided the German, "you haf been to riding horses accustomed. Goot. You shall now ride a horse for der Kaiser, und," he added meaningly, "you shall do it vell. You may now say goot bye to dese odder poys und come mit me. Der oath ve vill administer."

Several soldiers fully armed, standing about, stepped forward at the Captain's signal. Placing themselves between Jimmie and his chums, they advanced, fairly compelling the lad to accompany them.

Thunderstruck at the proceedings, but unable to render any assistance to their comrade, the three lads watched Jimmie disappear through the doorway. Then, as they were left quite alone, they turned to one another with an air of dejection.

"What shall we do, Ned?" inquired Jack presently.

"Yes, Ned," put in Harry, with something very like a catch in his voice, "let's have your ideas. You are always ready with some suggestion in an emergency. What shall we do?"

"In the first place, boys," answered Ned, "I'm mighty glad to hear you ask questions like that. It shows me that you are ready for action instead of wanting to sit down and give way to despair. I'm ready for action this

minute if I could only decide what should be done."

"I move we hunt around and find some guns and go hold that bunch of Germans up and take Jimmie away from them!" said Harry impulsively.

"Do you suppose the Captain will make good on his threat of making Jimmie enlist in their cavalry regiment?" asked Jack, ignoring Harry's suggestion. "If they do, can't he slip away some night?"

"What if he does?" inquired Harry. "Where would he slip to, and where shall we get to help him? It seems to me that every minute counts now. If they get him into a cavalry regiment they'll want to be on the move right away. At times like these, with Germany fighting the whole of Europe, they can't afford to let a regiment remain idle."

"That's very true," nodded Ned thoughtfully. "Germany has won a victory over Russia, and that may relieve some of her forces in the east, at least temporarily, until Russia gathers enough of an army to make another assault. In that case they might send the cavalry regiment toward the western front in France or Belgium, where Germany is meeting the French, English and other troops."

"Do you think they will make Jimmie go

along and fight the allies?" questioned Jack. "If they do that, he may get killed."

"Perhaps that would suit the German Captain as well as anything else," observed Ned. "It would save him the trouble and responsibility of ordering the red-head shot immediately."

"Then in that case," continued Jack, "I second Harry's motion and hope it is carried unanimously. Let's get busy and get the boy."

"I think you are right," agreed Ned. "Now, if we can have some plan of action we'll be able to make more headway than without it."

"Right you are, Scout Master!" cried Jack. "What is your plan?"

"Well," began Ned, glancing at his comrades, "it seems almost too bold a thing to try just at first thought, but I can't think of anything better than to try to get away from this place in the Eagle, and then watch our chance to kidnap Jimmie from those fellows."

"A fine idea!" was Harry's almost cheerful response. "Ned, there's nothing too bold to try once, anyway. Maybe we can get Jimmie out of their hands. If we ever do—"

Harry's clenched first, which he shook at the door out of which the Germans had led Jimmie, spoke more eloquently than his unfinished sentence. Plainly he was ready for action.

"Let's slip out of here while we have a chance," suggested Ned.

"Just the thing!" agreed Jack. "It's the best time we'll ever find. The incoming army is pretty busy just now and won't see us."

With one accord the three lads moved toward the door. Ned glanced around the partially wrecked apartment in the hope of discovering something that would be of use to them in their endeavor to help Jimmie escape. An object in one corner caught his attention.

As Ned stepped forward to examine the object he had seen, he was startled to hear a cry from Jack, who had been looking from a window.

"Look!" cried the boy, pointing toward the street. "They're actually making Jimmie take an oath of enlistment!"

Quickly joining Jack, Ned and Harry saw Jimmie standing in the street, surrounded by German soldiers wearing the uniforms of Uhlans. Directly behind the lad stood one of the soldiers with the muzzle of a gun pressed against Jimmie's back. Before him an officer stood, apparently administering some form of oath. The three boys could see Jimmie's lips move in response to the prompting of the officer.

Directly the ceremony was ended and the

soldiers turned as if preparing to mount their horses, standing near.

"There's a bunch coming back to this house!" declared Jack.

"Wonder what they want?" mused Harry in a puzzled manner.

"I think they have decided they want three more recruits!"

"Good night!" was the lad's startled ejaculation. "Let's go!"

"Come over here," directed Ned, springing toward a corner of the room. "I think I've found something that will help us out."

CHAPTER II

A FRIEND APPEARS

Harry and Jack hastened to cross the room strewn with wreckage left by the exploding shell. Ned was already kneeling in the corner.

"What is it, Ned?" cried Jack excitedly. "Have you got a gun?"

"No, not a gun," replied Ned in suppressed excitement, "but it may prove more useful than a gun at this time."

"Oh, I see what it is!" was Harry's exclamation. "Hurrah! We may be able to beat them out after all. Hurry!"

"Huh!" scornfully put in Jack. "Nothing but a trap door into the cellar! I wouldn't give much for that!"

Ned, without replying to either lad, was busily scraping away the refuse from the corner. Almost concealed by the litter, he had seen a huge ring in the floor and, naturally concluding that it was fitted into a trap door, had begun an investigation for the purpose of discovering if the door led to a passage that might afford a means of escape for the lads. The proximity of the approaching soldiers made

their need of some haven of refuge an imperative one.

Presently Ned discovered the outlines of the trap door, which he had correctly surmised to be in that spot. The location of the debris favored the quick plan that had formulated in Ned's fertile brain. He rose to his feet and gave a quick glance about the room.

Without wasting time or effort in conversation, the lad quickly pointed toward a table that lay upturned not far from the trap door. Signalling to his comrades for assistance, he darted toward the object and began dragging it to a position directly over the trap door.

Jack and Harry, divining his intention, hastened to assist Ned. Their united efforts soon placed the table in position. It was the work of but a moment to raise the trap door and prop it up with a short piece of wood from the wreckage strewn about. Making the well-known signal used by railroad men in the United States as a sign for a fireman to shovel more coal into the firebox, Ned urged the others to descend into the darkness that yawned mysteriously at their feet.

Jack was first through the opening. He clung to the rim for a moment with his hands. Then he released his hold and dropped.

Harry and Ned, impatiently waiting for

Jack to pass through the door, heard him drop to a floor below and give a startled cry. Then they prepared to follow just as the tramp of many feet resounded through the passage outside the room. Harry slipped into the opening and in turn dropped out of sight. Ned followed feet first and for an instant hung from the sill.

Grasping the stick that had been used as a prop, Ned gave a mightly wrench backward and fell. He said afterward that it seemed as if he had taken a full week to drop from his position to the floor below. In reality the drop was not a great one. The distance was, however, greater than the height of any of the three boys, and explained their inability to gain a foothold before releasing their hold upon the floor above. For a moment Ned was unable to regain his breath.

Presently he sat upright and began to search for his comrades.

"Jack, Harry!" he called softly. "Where are you?"

"Here we are, Ned," came a whisper from the darkness that shut the boys in on every hand. "Can you see us?"

"Can't see a thing!" declared Ned. "Where are you, anyway?"

"Stay right where you are and we'll be there

in a moment," was Harry's answer. "This is one horrible place or I'm a Dutchman!"

"Come on, then, and be quick about it," urged Ned. "I wonder if we have dropped out of the frying pan into the fire," he added.

"Impossible," chuckled Jack, in spite of the seriousness of their predicament. "Where there's fire there's light, and I can't see a single ray of light in this miserable place!"

"Hush, Jack!" cautioned Harry. "Not so loud or they'll find us. Can't you hear them tramping about in the room above?"

Harry's question brought Ned and Jack to a realization of the fact that the room they had so recently quitted was occupied by the soldiers from whom they had tried to escape. Footsteps echoed along the stout floor, and the boys could hear sounds indicating that pieces of furniture were being hurriedly overturned.

"Uh!" grunted Jack as he suddenly bumped into Ned. "Wonder you wouldn't blow signals when you're going to cross ahead of a fellow."

"Hush!" whispered Ned. "They may hear us! Let's wait a bit!"

All three boys drew close together. They instinctively clasped hands in the darkness, looking for some degree of comfort in the act.

The noises above them gradually lessened. Presently they ceased altogether, and the boys

could hear footsteps clattering along the floor in the direction they assumed the door to be. Directly quiet reigned in the place.

"They've gone, I guess," Ned said after a moment's wait. "Now what shall we do? Shall we climb back into the house?"

"I move that we explore this apartment first," said Jack.

"Oh, no!" urged Harry. "This isn't a nice place to go poking around in. We have troubles enough already without hunting more."

"What's your objection to looking the place over?" asked Ned.

"Rats!" was Harry's brief but expressive explanation.

"Rats?" queried Ned. "What do you mean? Are there rats here?"

"There certainly are, and lots of them," was the positive answer. "When I dropped into this place I think I dropped onto one, and must have crushed him before he had time to squeal. I heard others running."

"We really ought to make a light," returned Ned. "We can't tell what the place is like without some way of seeing it."

"There's a light!" was Jack's sudden exclamation. "See it over there to the right. Why," he added, "there are two lights!"

"And I see others!" cried Harry. "I believe it's the eyes of the rats. Perhaps they were frightened away and are coming back."

"Have you any matches?" asked Ned. "I haven't a one with me. It's careless, I know, but not a match can I find in my pockets."

"Where's your searchlight?" inquired Jack. "Haven't you that?"

"No; the Germans took that away from me when they searched us."

"I have two matches," said Harry, "but I don't want to waste them. Perhaps it will be a long time before we get any more, and I feel that we ought to save them if possible."

"Maybe we can find some stuff here dry enough to make a fire with, and that'll give us light!" suggested Jack.

"Good idea!" responded Ned. "The place feels dry enough."

"Let's keep hold of hands and move slowly about," put in Harry. "In that way we won't be separated and may find just what we want."

Acting on this suggestion, the boys clasped hands and moved slowly about, feeling their way cautiously with their feet. They seemed to be in a cellar with a solid stone floor that had been made quite smooth.

"Here's something!" exclaimed Harry as

his foot struck a small object. "This feels like a piece of wood."

"Here's my knife; let's whittle some shavings," offered Jack.

In a short time the boy had succeeded in producing the desired shavings from the board Harry had discovered. Gathering these carefully in his hands, he held them ready to receive the flame from Harry's match. All three lads eagerly gathered closer together as Harry prepared to strike the match that would give them the desired ability to see. Harry's hand trembled a trifle in spite of his effort at self-control. His first effort was unsuccessful.

"Careful, Harry," admonished Ned. "Better strike it on your shoe sole. That makes a better match scratcher than your trousers."

"Correct!" observed Jack. "And go easy," he added. "We have only two, you know. If anything should happen, you understand—"

"Yes, I know," answered Harry. "That's why I'm trying to be extra careful. I'm just as anxious for a light as you are."

"The rats are coming closer," observed Jack, a slight quaver perceptible in his voice. "I don't want them to start anything."

"All right now, Harry; lean on me a bit to balance yourself," urged Ned. "Make sure this time, and get it in your cupped hands."

"Here goes!" announced Harry, lifting one foot and striking the match upon the sole of his shoe. "Here comes the light!"

But, contrary to expectations, the light did not come, although the lad tried again and again.

"Try the other match, Harry; maybe this one got wet somehow and won't work," suggested Jack, stepping closer.

"I have tried them both," declared Harry in a faint voice.

"What's the matter, then?" demanded Jack excitedly.

"I guess they are those safety matches that will light only on the box," was Harry's explanation. "I haven't the box, either," he added in a voice scarcely above a whisper. "It's no go, boys!"

"Look through all your pockets," directed Ned, "and see if there isn't a scrap of box left by oversight. We must have a light!"

Frantically the three boys searched their pockets, but could discover no shred or vestige of a box on which to strike the impregnated safety matches held by Harry. At length they gave up the effort.

"That's peculiar!" declared Jack with emphasis. "Just think of all the matches used every day in the United States by thousands

and thousands of people who never think of saving them. We have used a whole lot of matches ourselves needlessly, and now we want just one as badly as we ever wanted anything. It's fierce!"

"It surely is fierce," agreed Ned, "but we'll have to make the best of it. It seems peculiar, too," he went on, "that the rats haven't begun anything. They seem to be all about us."

"Yes, but they are not moving about very fast," observed Harry. "Maybe they're afraid of us yet. Let's make a noise and scare them."

"How shall we do it?" asked Jack. "What will you make a noise with if you haven't anything to use? Tell me that!"

"Stamp on the floor good and hard; that'll scare them."

"All right; here goes!" agreed Jack, suiting the action to the word.

All three boys were startled at the result of Jack's stamping. A crackling sound was heard, followed by a tiny spurt of flame from the floor under his foot.

"Easy there, easy!" cried Harry, dropping to his knees. "That's just what we wanted. Don't move now, but give me those shavings!"

With trembling hands the lad took the shavings from Jack's hand. Carefully shielding the tiny flame from possible draughts of air,

the boy held the point of one of the thin pieces of wood over the flare. In a moment it had caught fire. Licking up the curl, the flame gradually leaped from one piece of wood to another until the entire handful was ablaze. The dancing light played upon the three faces and sent a glow out into the surrounding blackness. Harry deposited the burning shavings upon the floor, where the fire was soon transmitted to the larger piece of wood Jack had used in whittling.

As the boys saw that the matter of fire was assured, they glanced first at each other, then let their gaze wander about the apartment.

"Goodness, the rats don't seem to be much afraid of fire!" exclaimed Jack, pointing toward a horde of rodents swarming about the place.

"What's that on them?" asked Harry wonderingly.

"I declare it's red!" exclaimed Ned. "It looks like blood!"

"Where'd they get blood from, I'd like to know!" protested Harry.

"There's only one answer to that just now, with all the dead and wounded soldiers about," answered Ned, shaking his head. "It's awful!"

"Let's get out of here as quick as we can," urged Jack. "Come on."

With one accord the lads turned from the swarm of rats.

"Where are you going?" demanded a strange voice from the darkness.

"Who are you?" asked Ned, startled by the sudden question.

"Maybe I'm a friend," was the answer. "Yes, I guess I am."

CHAPTER III

OUT OF THE FLAMES

When the soldier who had been holding his rifle at Jimmie's back lowered the weapon and the ceremony of administering the oath of allegiance to the Kaiser had been completed, the red-headed Boy Scout who had been masquerading under a Cossack uniform breathed a deep sigh of relief that but faintly expressed his sentiments.

In spite of the seriousness of the situation, Jimmie maintained a mental reservation that little less than contradicted his words so recently spoken. He felt that it would be only policy to obey the orders of those in superior force, since he could see no advantage to be gained by a flat refusal. His thoughts rapidly compassed the situation, and he recognized the fact that the invading horde of Germans were in no mood to consider dispassionately the matter of a boy more or less who was found under the circumstances in which they had discovered Jimmie.

Reluctantly, therefore, but because he

thought it by far the better plan, the lad had submitted to the course insisted upon.

During all the time that he had been repeating the words after the officer the boy had been mentally conjecturing a means of escape whereby he might rejoin his chums and be fairly sure of the escape of the entire party from the hands of the army that had so recently captured Peremysl and who were now engaged in bringing order out of the apparent chaos that reigned.

Not until the searching party returned and reported to the Captain their unsuccessful quest after his three comrades did Jimmie realize that an effort was being made to apprehend them.

Then he began to believe that it was not the intention of the German Captain to allow the boys to leave the country. The thought was a very disquieting one. In entertaining it, Jimmie felt himself fully justified in taking any possible course of escape.

"Well, my lad," began the Captain, addressing Jimmie in a not unkindly tone, the while his blue eyes regarded the lad with an amused glance, "now that you are a full-fledged Uhlan and your comrades are on their way home, you will be fitted out with a new uniform by the proper department. See that you select a good

strong one, for we have plenty of rough work ahead of us. Yes?"

"Very good, sir!" replied Jimmie with outward politeness, although his heart was filled with rage at the thought of donning the German uniform. "I shall try to do well whatever I undertake."

"Spoken like a man!" declared the officer with a short laugh.

A brief order spoken in the German language to an orderly nearby resulted in that individual signing to Jimmie. Obediently the lad followed his new guide. Past groups of soldiers who were, by their fair hair, round cheeks, blue eyes and general stocky build, members of the German army, the boy and his conductor took their way.

Not far down the street they came upon several wagons in charge of a commissioned officer, before whom the guide stopped with a very formal salute. After receiving a recognition of his salute the guide explained his errand. A laughing response greeted his explanation of circumstances. The officer called one of his aides, and the work of outfitting the erstwhile Cossack began.

Jimmie discovered that the wagons were veritable stores on wheels, and was greatly surprised at the neatness and order with which the

large assortment of goods were disposed. No difficulty was experienced in securing clothing of the proper dimensions, and Jimmie soon stood forth to all external appearances as loyal and brave a Uhlan as ever followed the banner of the Emperor or stuck a lance into a dummy at riding exercise. He could not restrain a laugh at the peculiar round cap that was fitted to his head.

"Now I'm hungry!" he declared as he surveyed himself in his new regalia. "Where's the eats?" he asked of the guide.

A stare from a pair of pale blue eyes was the only response.

"I say," began Jimmie in a louder tone, "I haven't had anything to eat for a long time. I'm hungry!" he finished in a shout.

Another stare and a nod of the head greeted this outburst.

"Aw, come off!" was Jimmie's disgusted sally. "Where are your ears? Wake up! It's six bells and the cook has struck. Here—"

Seizing the guide by the sleeve, Jimmie shook his finger under the other's nose for attention. Then he repeated his old-time universal sign language denoting hunger.

The guide followed with great interest Jimmie's motion of pointing into his open mouth and gazed delightedly at the patting of the

stomach. Apparently, however, he could discover nothing amiss with the belt buckle or any of the accoutrements that adorned the person of the new-found recruit. He shook his head in a negative way.

"Oh, you mutton-head!" scorned Jimmie. Then, recalling the few words of German he had learned in haphazard fashion, he began again, pausing between each word to give emphasis to his request.

"Ach, Ich say, old scout," he stated, "Ich would like some brodt haben, und sauer kraut, und wiener wurst, and kaffee, and pumpernickel, und kaffekuchen, und Kolbfleisch, und —oh, whatever you have handy."

A smile slowly spread over the face of the guide as he began to comprehend Jimmie's meaning. He nodded vigorously.

"And I say, dumbhead, Heute Ganse Braten!" Jimmie added vigorously. "There!" he declared in an undertone, "I know I saw that sign in Dick Stein's restaurant on the north side in Chicago one time when I was there, and I asked the man what it meant. He said it was German for 'We have roast goose to-day,' and I'd like a little of that, too."

"So-o," drawled the guide. "Und you haf been by Stein's restaurant? Yes? Vell, I vas

waiter dere for two, tree year. It is a nice blace."

"You rascal!" shouted Jimmie. "You understood me all the time. Why didn't you let me know you understood English at first?"

"Maype I didn't understand," the other stated simply.

"Maybe you didn't, and again maybe you did," retorted the lad rather tartly. "If you keep on playing your monkey shines on me, you'll get me sore pretty soon, and I'll be tempted to cloud up and rain all over you. And there'll be considerable dunder und blitzen along with the cyclonic disturbance in the atmosphere," he added.

"All right," was the calm response. "You iss hungry. Maybe you vant someding to eat. Yes? Or maybe not?"

"Great frozen hot boxes!" cried Jimmie in a despairing tone. "I don't see how, with all the scarcity of ivory in the market, the billiard ball makers let you roam about at large so long. Why," he added with rising indignation, "you're giving the exact symptoms of a chap who is ossified from the shoulders to the sky! Of course I want to eat, and I'd be de-lighted to perform that simple operation now."

"But to eat before mess, it is verboten," declared the guide.

"Say," retorted Jimmie, "just let me have your name and the address of any relatives you want notified in case of accident. Something is going to blow up pretty soon, and when the explosion is over they'll go around with a sponge to gather up the pieces of the innocent bytsanders. Among those present was a former waiter at Dick Stein's."

"Ach, yes," slowly replied the other. "My name iss Otto von Freundlich. In America I am called Friendly Otto. It iss so in der telephone book. Names iss backwards put down."

"Well, if you'll just be good enough to get me one of those nice large German pancakes that we used to get at Stein's, with a couple of cups of coffee and a little 'T' bone steak well done, with some fried potatoes and a side order of cauliflower in cream, some cold slaw, a little lettuce, some lentils, and a small platter of sauer kraut, I'll try to worry along until mess time. Can't we eat at all?"

"No, not all of dot," soberly responded Otto seriously, evidently believing that Jimmie intended to eat everything he had mentioned.

"Then for pity's sake tell me what I can have. I'm getting so hungry I could almost eat the wheels off this wagon."

"Maybe a little soup und some rye bread?" replied Otto inquiringly.

"That listens good to your Uncle Dudley," was Jimmie's response in a somewhat mollified tone. "Lead me to it and I'll do the rest."

"Come," directed Otto, starting away and beckoning the lad to follow. "Come; der cook maybe has something good for hungry soldiers."

Jimmie followed with much interest, taking note of everything as he went along. Here he saw a group of soldiers resting after some evidently heavy work. There another group were arranging their accoutrements and polishing their weapons as they rested in the shade of a broken wall that had withstood the heavy hammering of the immense German guns during the days of bombardment of the city.

Wagons were drawn up along the side of the street, gasoline trucks were darting hither and thither on various errands, while small groups of horsemen were constantly passing to and fro about the town.

Everywhere was activity, indicating to Jimmie that not only were the Germans investing the city and preparing it for their occupation, but that other preparations were under way. This could only mean to the lad that the commander of the invading forces was preparing to press the advantage he had gained by following the Russian army he had driven from Per-

emysl and attempt to administer a crushing blow.

"What is all this bustle about, Otto?" he asked presently.

"Ach, I know not," was the reply. "Und if I should know, it is verboten that I should say. You will discover in good time."

"That's all right, but I'll bet my last year's hat that you know pretty well what's going on if you'd only talk a bit."

"That is perhaps so and perhaps not so," replied Otto.

"All right; I vote yes on the amendment," persisted Jimmie, feeling that by a little maneuvering he could learn something from his guide. "From what the Captain said while we were in the house and you were on the street, I understand that your regiment will be one of the first to be tolled off to pursue the Russians. Maybe he'll send me with them. I do hope so, for that will give me a chance to get a whack at them in payment for the hard treatment I received."

"Ach, nein!" protested Otto, evidently endeavoring to set Jimmie right. "My regiment is to return. We have done our work here."

"I thought so all the time," muttered Jimmie. "You may have been in America a while, but you haven't got wise to the great game of

'bluff' the Americans pull off once in a while. You're easy."

"What is dot?" inquired Otto. "I did not hear what you say."

"I say," replied Jimmie in a louder tone, "I'm hungry. I want something to eat, and I'm curious to know what is in that bundle you are carrying so carefully. Is it dynamite or something?"

"Nein; it is the Russian Cossack uniform you wore. I shall burn it when we arrive at the kitchen you see ahead of us."

"Oh, so you don't like Cossack uniforms any better than I do."

"It is orders," was the German's simple statement.

"Well, here we are at the cook's place," announced Jimmie as the two drew near a movable kitchen equipment in the street.

A few words addressed to the person in charge of the kitchen brought forth a smiling response. In a moment Jimmie was supplied with a small dish of nourishing stew of cabbages and beans.

He devoured the contents of the dish with an appetite, and gladly accepted the cup of black unsweetened coffee that was tendered.

"Thank you! That was just like mother

used to make!" he said as he returned the empty dish and cup. "I'll see you again."

Jimmie stepped back a pace, preparing to follow Otto, presuming that he would lead the way to regimental hedquarters.

As he glanced about in search of his guide he discovered the German stuffing the discarded Cossack uniform into the furnace underneath a huge kettle. With a startled cry Jimmie grasped frantically at his breast. Then he darted forward and snatched the clothing from the fire.

CHAPTER IV

BURIED ALIVE

"Well, if you're a friend, step forward and let us see what you look like," challenged Ned, turning in the direction from whence the strange voice proceeded. "You needn't be afraid to show your face."

"I'm not the one who is afraid," was the reply.

"We're not afraid, if that's what you mean," retorted the lad.

A chuckle from the newcomer was the only response.

"Are you coming forward?" asked Ned in a rather impatient tone, for his experiences of the last few moments had been enough to cause him to be slightly irritable. "I'd like to see you."

As the lad spoke he peered eagerly toward the blackness surrounding himself and his chums. Owing to the faintness of the flame from their small fire, the darkness lying about them like a dense pall was too great for his eyes to pierce. Try as he might, he could not

distinguish even the faintest outline of the stranger

"If you are afraid of the rats or the Germans you might step over this way and we'll go to a more convenient and pleasant place. This isn't a cheerful spot," was the stranger's suggestion.

This invitation was received in silence by the three boys.

"Of course," the other continued, "if you prefer to remain here and talk it over with the rodents, I have no objections."

"Perhaps we would rather take our own way out of here," Ned stated with little friendliness in his voice.

"Perhaps," was the dry response from the utter darkness. "But," went on the stranger, "you'd have a beautiful time doing it. There's only one way out of this place except by the trap door through which you came. Unless you're regular little derricks you can't move all that rubbish piled on top of the trap door, and you'd not be apt to discover the underground exit if you had the eyes of a hawk and an electric light plant besides. Better come along."

Ned had not relaxed his clasp on the hands of his companions, and now drew them closer to him. In a whisper he asked:

"What do you think, boys? Shall we do as he suggests?"

"Might as well," said Jack. "We can't be in much worse case than we are now, and those rats might get good and ugly when they get wise to our being here. I move we follow him."

"Second the motion, unless you've got a better suggestion," added Harry. "This place is getting on my nerves. Let's go."

"I rather feel as if we ought not to go with this fellow unless he's willing to show himself and let us get an idea who he is," Ned stated in a hesitating way. "Perhaps you boys are right, but I don't feel at all easy about it. Maybe he's trying to get us into a trap."

"That's so," agreed Harry. "At least if we remain where we are we'll be no worse off than we would have been without him."

"You're right there," put in Jack, "but on the other hand we're in a bad fix, and Jimmie's outside and needs us. This fellow's coming may be just the chance for escape that we are wanting. Suppose we follow him as he suggests and all the while remember our motto to 'Be Prepared.' Wouldn't that be the proper course?"

"I guess you're right, Jack," Ned said with a sigh. "Perhaps I'm wrong about it. I don't want to overlook a chance to help Jimmie and

get back to America. I'll withdraw my objections."

"All right, then, let's get started. Tell him so."

"Are you there?" Ned called out in a louder tone, addressing himself toward the place from which the stranger's voice had come.

"I am for a minute," answered the other. "But I'm going now. If you care to come with me I'll be glad to take you out of here."

"Where will you take us?" asked Ned, reluctant still to follow.

"That's something I cannot say right now. You'll find out."

"All right," consented the boy, starting forward. "But remember," he cautioned, "we shall not relish anything in the way of tricks."

"Suspicious still, I see," laughed the other. "Well, follow this light, and be careful how you step. There may be irregularities in the floor that you'll have to discover for yourselves. It won't be safe to do any talking for a while. The Germans are watchful."

The three boys were startled to observe a circle of light appear upon the stone floor of the apartment at some little distance from the spot where they were standing. It appeared to emanate from an electric searchlight held in the hands of the stranger.

Ned took a step toward the light. Jack and Harry did likewise. Their surprise increased as they observed that the light moved along the floor at a pace about equal to their own.

Ned thought that he could faintly discern the feet of the person carrying the light, but was unable to learn anything of the character of the person. He was torn between his desire to escape from the apartment and the wish to learn the identity of the stranger.

Only a few steps had been taken by the stranger before the light was extinguished. Instantly the three boys halted.

"S-s-sh!" came a warning hiss. "Be mighty careful now of your conversation and your footsteps. Keep as quiet as possible and follow me closely. We are all in extreme danger!"

In spite of his efforts at self-control, Ned's muscles trembled and he found it difficult to walk steadily. Assuming that his chums were in like plight, the lad summoned all his courage and reached out a reassuring hand to the others. The contact with his friends seemed to restore the equilibrium that had been Ned's most valuable asset in times of stress and danger in his many adventures.

Long afterwards the boy declared that in all his experiences that compassed many strange and hazardous enterprises in the United

States, Canada, Mexico, the Philippines, China and other countries he had never felt so keenly the need of aid as he did at that moment.

Not for long, however, were the boys permitted to consider the peril of their position. Almost instantly they heard a faint grating sound directly in front of them. A cold draught of damp, musty air struck their faces, and they understood that a door had been opened into some other apartment. The odor of the incoming air told them plainly that the next apartment was also underground, and they surmised that it had not recently been occupied.

"Come!" was the command borne to their ears in the faintest of whispers from the person leading the way.

Unhesitatingly the lads advanced. Jack had taken but a couple of steps before he collided with some solid object. The shock of contact brought forth a grunt of surprise. At the same moment Harry went through a similar experience. Ned met no resistance and nearly lost his hold of the others before he recovered his balance.

"Gee!" Jack whispered, "I've hit a wall!"

"Here, too!" put in Harry, lowering his whisper to a mere breath.

"Single file, lock step," directed Ned.

Jack and Harry fell in behind their Scout Master obediently, and the little party began groping its way along. Ned reached out a hand on either side as he went forward. His hands came in contact with walls that appeared to be made of stone. The dampness had gathered in great drops on the surface. A slime had been deposited that made Ned shudder as he felt it. He knew, however, that this was no time to permit an interruption through squeamishness.

There was now no guiding light in advance, and the boys cautiously picked their way along the stones, with Ned feeling every inch of the way before he set his foot down. Directly the lad heard another warning hiss. This time the sound was closer than formerly.

"Put your hand on my shoulder," came the whispered command.

Ned followed this instruction immediately. He judged by the height to which he raised his hand to rest it upon the other's shoulder that the stranger was a person of about his own build. His sense of touch also told him that the other's clothing was of a material similar to the khaki uniform he himself was wearing. A faint odor of gasoline and grease assailed his nostrils, particularly distinguishable because

of the damp air in which the party was traveling.

Suddenly the boys were startled by the sound of an explosion that came faintly to their ears. The earth in their vicinity trembled.

"What's that?" asked Ned in a whisper. "What's going on?"

"Hush!" replied the guide. "The Germans are making some improvements in the town. They are blowing down some dangerous walls. Now keep as quiet as you can and follow me. We'll have to hurry!"

Ned made no further attempt at conversation, but obediently gave his entire attention to following the strange person in advance.

Before the little party had traversed the passage to any considerable distance they heard several other explosions similar to the first. One particularly louder than the others was followed by the sound of small pieces of rock tumbling from the roof and walls of the passage. Ned pressed still closer to his guide, while Jack and Harry needed no urging to make them crowd up to Ned in their impatience.

Not far from the point where the boys had noticed the pieces of rock falling the guide turned a corner abruptly. Ned wondered how he was able in the intense blackness to distin-

guish so accurately the spot for making the turn, but refrained from making any comment.

As he followed the guide around the corner the lad's foot struck against an object lying on the floor. A metallic ring from the object he had kicked caught the lad's attention. Slipping his hand quickly down the other's back in preparation for a movement to pick up the object, Ned was surprised to come in contact with a belt. He was startled to observe that the belt was filled with cartridges.

Without stopping to comment upon the circumstance, Ned stooped quickly with hand outstretched. His fingers came in contact with the object his foot had struck. He instantly recognized it to be an automatic pistol. Restraining his impulse to cry out, the lad shifted the weapon in his hand to a grip that would permit him to use it in case such a move was necessary. He straightened up at once.

Scarcely had the boys taken another dozen steps before they heard the voices of a number of men, all apparently endeavoring to talk at once and using a language that was unintelligible to the lads.

Greater caution, if possible, was now used by all in their negotiating the dark passage. A few steps farther on carried them past the place where the voices had been heard. Ned

breathed a sigh of relief as the voices died away in the distance.

Presently the guide halted. He turned to a position where he could face Ned. Still speaking in a whisper, he said:

"We are not out of danger yet, but I'll thank you to let me have that automatic you picked up back there. It's mine!"

"Come on, now, hand it over," continued the other.

"Where did you get it?" whispered Ned. "Can you prove what you say?"

"Of course I can!" replied the other. "I'm a bird man, and that is part of my equipment. You have no right to it!"

A louder detonation than any they had heard yet drowned Ned's reply. The walls in the passage seemed shaking as if about to fall. From the passage in their rear came shrieks and groans. An odor of sulphur came blowing upon their backs. A crashing and grinding noise filled the air. Jack and Harry closed in upon the others.

"Let's get out of here as quick as we can," urged Ned.

"We're at the end of the passage!" declared the guide. "That blast has probably filled the corridor back of us with rubbish. Unless we can dig a way out of it, we're buried alive!"

CHAPTER V.

A GUARD IN DISGRACE

Jimmie's momentum carried him toward the camp kettle with such violence that he was unable to check his speed. He could only swerve his course enough to avoid actually falling into the open door through which fuel had been fed. Unfortunately, however, the lad lost his footing and, as he fell, thrust a hand against the hot iron.

"Ow, wow!" yelled Jimmie, as he rolled over the ground, dragging with him the already burning Cossack uniform.

"Here, here!" shouted Otto, rousing from his phlegmatic attitude and springing forward in Jimmie's direction. "Leave dot alone!"

Jimmie rose to his feet nursing his burned hand and casting a glance of extreme disgust toward his new-found friend.

"What business have you got burning up my clothes, I'd like to know!" he indignantly began. "You big sauer kraut eater. You don't seem to know that clothes cost money and that

these clothes were presented to me by the Imperial Czar of Russia!"

"Dot makes no difference about dot Russian bizness," answered Otto doggedly; "my orders iss to burn dot uniform, und dot's chust vot I'm going to do. Maybe you would like to watch me."

"Yes, I'll watch you," Jimmie stated aggressively, his face flushing until the freckles were scarcely distinguishable. "You can burn the old uniform as fast as you like, but there is something in it that I want before you start the conflagration."

Otto stretched forth a hand in an effort to wrest the already charred and smoldering garments from The Wolf. He evidently intended to take matters strictly into his own hands and obey orders to the letter, regardless of Jimmie's wishes in the matter.

Jimmie just as resolutely intended to have his own way about the matter, although he had no objection to the ultimate burning of the discarded insignia of the gallant troop he had at one time joined.

Although suffering keenly from the hand that had come in contact with the iron and that would be giving him pain for some time, Jimmie directed his attention to a search of the garments. He thrust his uninjured hand into

one pocket after another, frantically groping for some object. Directly he gave a glad shout and withdrew his hand, clutching a small packet from which a loop of heavy cord hung.

Otto had lost some of the zest with which he had been imbued when he first raised an objection to Jimmie's action. His sluggish nature had dominated his movements, and now he moved forward with the ponderous motions of the average German agriculturist, although it was plain to the observers standing about that nothing short of a superior force could deter his progress or swerve him from his course.

"I've got it!" shouted Jimmie gleefully as he grasped the packet and attempted to gather up the scattered garments.

"Yes," put in Otto, in a voice which betokened his rage because his beloved orders had not been obeyed, "you haf got it, und now you will get someting else! I have someting for you right here!"

"You're welcome to the uniform now," was Jimmie's response. "I'm through with the uniform, and I hope with the Russian army."

"Maybe so," stated Otto, growling forth the words in a tone resembling the greeting usually given a tramp by a bulldog, "but you ain't through with the German army, by a long shot!"

"Oh, the German army ain't so much," scorned Jimmie. "I've seen lots of armies that could tie you Dutchmen into knots."

"Yes, they could—not!" derisively put in Otto, with an air that he had evidently picked up during his experience on the north side of Chicago. "You wait; I will show you someting!"

Jimmie's interest in the packet had absorbed his attention to such an extent that he had not noticed the approach of the German, and it was not until Otto's great arms surrounded his form that the boy realized his danger. He had considered Otto merely as a guide, and had not thought it possible for him to act in any other capacity. Now he understood that the German intended to do him bodily harm, if possible. Quickly as the realization of his danger flashed through the boy's active mind, he began to plan a means of escape. He well understood that, struggle as he might, his strength would be far less than that of his antagonist, and he knew that, in order to escape, he must resort to his knoweldge of wrestling and boxing.

Although compelled to think and act quickly in the emergency, a recollection of Ned Nestor's training and the drills to which he had subjected his fellow Boy Scouts flashed across Jimmie's vision.

Otto's arms had encircled Jimmie's form and were slowly tightening in a python-like constriction that forced Jimmie's organs upward into his ribs and shut off his heart action. Again Jimmie recalled vividly his experiences in trying to break a "body scissors" on the mat. This time, however, he cast aside the rules of conduct that forbid fouls and determined to free himself at whatever cost.

Otto's surprise at feeling Jimmie's heels gouging up and down his shin was exceeded only by his astonishment at receiving a blow on the chin from Jimmie's red head. Butting in a fight was a part of "the game" that the former newsboy had picked up in his encounters on the Bowery when protecting his corner from other vendors.

Long since discarded, the accomplishment now served Jimmie well, and he used it effectively, not forgetting to keep one foot in action as he industriously pegged away at the foot upon which his heel had first landed. Jimmie believed thoroughly in the old adage that 'continual dropping will wear away a stone.' "

Black specks began to float slowly across Jimmie's vision and his breath seemed to have left his body. In place of lungs the boy felt he had only a great raging furnace. His foot be-

gan to be heavier and heavier. He was about to give up in despair.

Without warning, Otto released his grasp to fling Jimmie from him as he stepped backward to escape the onslaught of kicks and blows from Jimmie's active head. As he released the boy he aimed a vicious swing that would have done a great deal of damage had it landed.

Luckily for the red-headed Uhlan, his feet became tangled in the remnants of the discarded and partly burned uniform that had been the innocent cause of the battle. Just as Otto aimed the blow at Jimmie's head the boy stumbled and fell backward.

There flashed to the lad's mind the thought that the Russian uniform had been the means of saving him from a most unwelcome hurt.

Perhaps one of Jimmie's most lovable qualities was the ability to see and appreciate a joke, no matter what the time or circumstances. This quality so dominated the lad that his comrades often declared he would laugh at his own expense even when he was hungry. Just now he was so impressed with the absurdity of the uniform's being the cause of his trouble and the means of his escape that he laughed aloud.

Unnoticed by either of the contestants, a considerable number of the cooks and "kitchen

police" had gathered to witness the difficulty between the two. These bystanders now offered words of encouragement in an effort to prolong the battle. It seemed that the dominating spirit of battle had not been satisfied during the several days of awful history-making struggle between the armies around the stricken city. The bloodlust was strong in their souls.

Jimmie heard their cries, although he could not distinguish the words they used, nor could he have understood them had he done so. He realized that Otto would probably hear and understand, and that for very shame, if for no other reason, the other man would return to the conflict. He therefore drew a deep breath and braced himself for the expected advance. Something warm and wet seemed to be trickling down over Jimmie's face. He put up a hand to wipe it away. The hand came away wet and sticky. To Jimmie's astonishment the hand was red.

A roar of rage assailed his ears, and Jimmie turned just in time to duck under a mighty swing. Angered at the persistence displayed, Jimmie let fly a stinging hook that fell short of its intended mark. Instead of landing on Otto's chin, as he had purposed, Jimmie flung his fist full upon the "Adam's apple" of his

antagonist, bringing forth a gurgling squawk that afforded merriment to the bystanders.

He lost no time in following up his advantage. Quickly springing forward, he landed a shower of blows, each one in a telling spot about Otto's head. The lad's ire was fully roused, and he entered into the matter of administering punishment with a zest.

Handicapped by his lighter weight, the boy could not hope successfully to cope with the burly German on anything like an equal footing, and consequently determined to press the advantage to the utmost, hence he wasted no blows, but made every one count.

Eager to administer what he considered ample punishment, yet wary and cautious, the lad gave his entire attention to his effort. He was looking for an opening through which he might slip a "knockout," and gave no heed to the events transpiring about him. Hence he did not notice the approach of a small party of officers until he felt a hand laid heavily upon his shoulder and a voice spoke in his ear.

"So, this is the way my soldiers behave when I am not present!" Jimmie heard the man say. He turned to gaze at the newcomer.

"Captain von Liebknecht!" he gasped in utter amazement.

"The same," replied the officer who had first

interviewed Jimmie in the partly ruined house. "It seems to me," he went on in a severe tone, his pale blue eyes narrowing to mere points, "that my recruits might be in better business than trying to spoil my veterans!"

For a moment Jimmie forgot to be respectful. The old spirit of Bowery repartee, so long held in leash and thoroughly muzzled by Ned Nestor's training and Jimmie's own self-control, had broken bonds, and now showed itself upon the surface without restraint.

"You can't spoil a bad egg, Captain!" was the impertinent response. "This fool Dutchman got too gay and I just put him into the clear!"

"Silence!" roared von Liebknecht. "No reply is necessary."

"Well, I made one just the same," was Jimmie's undaunted retort.

"So I observe," remarked the officer, "and for that you shall be punished. It shall be my pleasant duty to see that you get your full share of regular work, and in addition I shall assign you to the delightful position of assisting the police detail."

"But I'm not big enough to be a policeman," objected Jimmie.

A smile spread over the face of the officer as he observed:

"That is your misfortune, not mine. If you had been so fortunate as to be a German, you would have been much bigger and perhaps more respectful. You will please remember in future to be at least civil."

Jimmie began to realize that it would not be to his advantage to continue the conversation, especially in the spirit already shown. He therefore drew himself up to his full height and gravely saluted, using the well-known Boy Scout form, with thumb and little finger touching and the other three fingers extended vertically, palm outward.

The action seemed to please von Liebknecht immensely, although he would not alter his decision in the least. A rapidly spoken order to an aide standing near resulted in Jimmie's being hurried away in the direction of the camp where the Uhlans' horses were quartered.

He thought he saw the wings of an aeroplane resting in an open space. Forms were moving about the plane. Jimmie started.

The lad began moving his arms as if stretching himself or going through a sort of setting-up exercise. Again and again he repeated the movements. A smile lighted the freckled face.

CHAPTER VI

A MYSTERIOUS SIGNAL

"Good night!" ejaculated Harry, as the guide finished speaking. "You certainly have got us into a tight box now!"

"That's what I say," put in Jack, "you're a fine one!"

"Let me have your searchlight," commanded Ned, retaining his grasp on the other's cartridge belt, "hand it over quickly."

"I'll run the searchlight myself," declared the unknown in a crisp tone. "You've got my gun and I guess that's enough!"

"Yes, and I know how to use it, too," replied Ned.

"There, there, Ned, this isn't any time to start arguing," urged Jack, pacifically, "let's get out of here first of all."

"Second the amendment," laughed Ned, controlling himself with a slight effort, "I've got this fellow dead to rights, and if he will only help us with his searchlight, we will try to get outside quickly."

"Well, he's going to help us," volunteered

Harry. "I'll see to that. Just notice this big rock I am holding."

"Don't get excited, boys," urged the stranger. "I'm doing everything I can to get all of us out of this mess. Our troubles all came about simply because of the fact that we were not 'Prepared.'"

"Then you believe in being prepared?" asked Jack.

"That's my motto—'Be Prepared'!" answered the stranger.

"That's our motto, also," put in Harry eagerly. "I wonder where you got that motto. You don't talk like the United States."

"Huh! I should say not!" declared the other. "But I came from a place that is every bit as good as the United States," he added.

"There's only one place that I know of," stated Ned emphatically, "that answers that description. What part of Canada are you from?"

"Vancouver," was the ready response. "Do you know the place?"

"Well, we ought to. We put in some time in British Columbia chasing a man who robbed the United States government."

"Good," declared the stranger. "My name is Gilmore—David Gilmore. I belong to the Moose Patrol of Vancouver."

"Dave, for short, I suppose," put in Jack in a more friendly tone.

"To my friends—yes," answered David with a short laugh.

"Now, boys," began Ned, "if it's agreeable, I suggest—"

A shriek of agony cut short the suggestion Ned was about to make. By common consent the boys drew closer together as the awful sound echoed through the narrow confines of the low tunnel in which they were imprisoned. All thoughts of introductions were driven instantly from their minds, to be replaced by their desire to render aid.

"The searchlight, Dave," said Ned quickly, falling naturally into the use of the shortened appellation. "Let's make haste."

A circle of flame from the searchlight in David's hand was his reply to this request. It fell upon the damp, slimy walls of the tunnel, illuminating a small space in their immediate neighborhood. The boy swung the searchlight to a position where it would give them a view of the area through which they had just come.

An appalling sight met their eyes. The explosion had wrecked the roof and sides of the narrow space. Heaps of broken rock and other debris choked the passage. Beneath one of the lumps projected the feet of a man. Be-

yond that the boys could dimly see the forms of one or two others. It seemed that several men had been unfortunately caught.

"Where did that fellow come from?" queried Ned anxiously, pointing toward the feet of the luckless individual who was screaming in agony.

"I don't know," Jack stated briefly, "but we'll help him out."

"All right, boys; let's get busy," urged Harry.

No further suggestions were needed to enlist the aid of all four boys. As they moved forward, their progress somewhat hindered by fallen rocks, the cries grew fainter and presently ceased.

As they reached the spot where the man lay imprisoned, David thrust the searchlight to a favorable position, where it would show them the face of the stranger. He knelt but a moment. Rising again to his feet, the lad turned to his new-found companions.

"I guess we're too late, boys," he said in a hushed voice.

"That's too bad," said Ned sympathetically. "I'm sorry."

"What shall we do?" questioned Jack. "Can't we help him at all?"

David shook his head sadly. He again

swung the searchlight around the place, examining the walls carefully as he did so.

"I'm sure that it's no use, boys," he said. "If the fellow had not been beyond help he would not have stopped crying out. In such a time as this, heartless though it may seem, we'll have to look out for ourselves without spending energy on those beyond help."

"You're right, I guess," agreed Ned sadly. "I heartily wish that we were all back in America again, beyond the influence of this awful war. I sincerely hope that it will be confined to Europe."

"I echo your sentiment," said David. "And now," he added briskly, "let us give our attention to getting out of this place. I wonder if we can move some of these looser stones and get through into the room beyond. We may be able to get out to the street that way."

"What do you know about the layout of this place?" asked Jack.

"We are now under one of the big buildings —I should say under the ruins of one of the big buildings of Peremysl. It got struck by shells during the early part of the engagement and was neglected after that. The men we heard were refugees from the Russian army who thought they would be able to appear after the German occupation and do some damage

to the invaders. They were well equipped with supplies of various sorts, including ammunition, and intended to get out to-night."

"I wonder if they have all gone?" asked Jack.

"I suppose the most of them are dead," answered David. "And we may join them unless we get out. Our chances look slim."

"I don't know about that," objected Ned. "I notice that the smell of powder is not so pronounced as it was a while ago. The air in here seems much better than it did before the explosion, and I believe that somewhere a passage has been opened which permits the air to flow in. It seems to me I can smell sweet air."

"I believe you're right, Ned," declared Harry sniffing.

"Let's get at these stones, then," suggested Jack, suiting the action to the word, and beginning to lift away lighter pieces of rock from the heap that confronted the lads.

All the boys took hold eagerly and began the task of removing the barrier that prevented their exit. They took turns holding the searchlight upon the work. Presently Jack announced that he could see light through the crevices between the stones. This announcement was hailed joyfully by the others.

"Hurrah!" announced Harry gleefully, as he pushed a piece of rock forward, opening a space wide enough to permit him to thrust an arm through. "One more chunk out of here and we can get through."

In another moment the four boys stood erect in a space that had formerly been a cellar. They drew deep draughts of air into their lungs and looked up beyond ruined walls to see the sky overhead.

"That looks good to me," stated Ned, pointing upward.

"Here too!" put in David. "Now I can get a good look at you fellows and will be able to recognize you readily the next time I see you. My," he added, "you are Boy Scouts, too."

"Why, of course," said Ned in astonishment. "What did you think we were? I hope you didn't take us for soldiers."

"Well, not exactly," said David, smiling, "but I really didn't have time to form a definite opinion before I heard that you were captured. Would you like to get back to your plane?" he asked.

"Would we?" asked Jack in a tone expressive of his intense longing for the Eagle. "You are just right, we would!"

"Perhaps we can manage to make it if the Germans have not taken it away," suggested

David. "I can't say for sure, but we can try."

"Let's be on our way, then," urged Harry, eager to start.

"Suppose we look about and look for something to eat," suggested Ned. "I'm beginning to appreciate Jimmie's feelings."

"I hope you're not hungry already?" laughed Jack, "Why," he added, "you had something to eat no longer ago than—"

"Yes, no longer ago than the last time we ate," interrupted Harry. "You may not believe it, but I'm getting so hungry I could eat anything."

"All right; call the waiter, then, and we'll all eat."

"Perhaps I can find something," volunteered David. "I know where the Russians kept most of their stores. They had a place over here at one side of this big space filled with things to eat and shoot and so on. They had a lot of stuff in there."

"Where do you suppose they have all gone?" asked Ned, glancing about.

"I rather imagine they have gotten away as fast as they could after the Germans began blowing down the tottering walls. Those fellows we saw back there in the tunnel were possibly trying to get away by that route," replied David. "I intended bringing you here when

we left the cellar where the rats were. I thought the way was clear."

"How did you happen to be there?" asked Ned.

"I got tired of being a prisoner," answered David. "Naturally, when the chance offered, I just slipped into the passage and started. I counted my steps to the end and found I must go the other way. When I had reached the cellar where you were I was exploring it when I heard the noise overhead. I just stayed in the dark until you made a light."

"Then you thought you'd help us out?" asked Harry.

"Yes," was the reply. "I felt that you needed a guide, and I had to do one good turn a day, you know. I thought that would be one."

"Sure, we know," Harry stated in a low voice. "I guess that was pretty nearly three good turns, wasn't it, Ned?"

"We'll count it as three, anyhow," responded Ned heartily.

"Now, you're hungry," interrupted David, rather loath to hear his own praises. "Come over this way and we'll see what we can find."

As David had predicted, the boys found a smaller room opening off the large one in which they were gathered. There was a miscellaneous collection of articles comprising food, am-

munition, arms and many other things. They at once attacked the food supply.

Harry gleefully announced the discovery of a can of beef from Chicago, while Jack went into ecstacies over a can of beans.

Without the loss of a moment the boys fell to and soon satisfied their hunger. Directly Jack began searching amongst the goods.

"Where did they store their water?" he asked David.

"I don't know that," replied the boy. "What is in that barrel?"

"Nothing but gasoline, judging by the smell," replied Jack.

"Hurrah!" shouted Ned, springing to his feet. "Just the thing!"

"Not to drink!" objected Jack scornfully. "Not for me, anyway!"

"No, but fine for the Eagle if we can get it there and find the plane still in working order. Let's hope they haven't taken it away."

"Let's go see," suggested David. "We can take along some of this gasoline in some of these empty tins and cans."

"You're a brick!" announced Jack. "I'm beginning to like you!"

Scrambling over the wreckage and ruins of the building, the four boys, each bearing a vessel with gasoline, gained the street. They

turned a corner and passed along apparently unnoticed. In a short time they stood in the vacant space where the Eagle had landed.

Before them the planes loomed large. Ned almost shouted for joy.

"There are soldiers on that hill over there!" announced Jack.

"One of them has gone crazy or something," said Harry, pointing.

"That's Boy Scout semaphore signals!" declared David.

"Answer him, Ned," suggested Jack. "Maybe he means us."

"He's spelling 'Wolf' in American," stated Ned. "Here comes more."

"Right arm above head, left horizontal—that's 'J,'" said David. "Right diagonally down, left across chest—that's 'I;' right diagonally down, left horizonal—that's 'M;' he repeats it; he repeats 'I;' right down in front, left up diagonally—that's 'E.'"

"That spells 'Jimmie!'" cried Harry in excitement.

CHAPTER VII

A SUSPECTED SPY

For a time Jimmie forgot the drudgery to which he had been sentenced as a result of his fight with Otto for possession of the tiny packet concealed in the Cossack uniform. Forgotten were the multiplicity of duties incident to his service as a member of the "kitchen police"—the work to which all offenders in the army were subjected, and which corresponded to the tasks of a garbage collector.

Apparently the lad was devoting himself wholly to the strenuous labor of calisthenics. There seemed to be no idea in his mind of making any certain motion a given number of times for the purpose of developing different muscles. Instead he merely placed his arms in various positions and held them there a moment before assuming a different attitude. Seldom did he repeat any motion.

We know, of course, that he had seen the boys as they emerged from the underground cavern that nearly proved their tomb. He had taken a chance on their being his comrades and

had made signals to attract their attention. When he received an answering wave of the arm from Ned he delightedly began sending a message by means of the well-known semaphore code. Although the lad possessed no flags or other means of carrying out fully the code as prescribed, he did the best he could with only his arms for signals. We know that Ned and his chums were able correctly to interpret the message Jimmie was sending.

"Great frozen hot boxes!" mused the boy half aloud. "They are down there among the ruins. I wonder how they got free of the searching party. Things have been coming pretty fast for me lately, and I declare I clean forgot the others. Wonder what they'll do."

He had not long to wait. Directly he saw Ned and the others consulting beside the aeroplane. The next moment Ned had stepped clear of the machine and began waving his arms after the same fashion adopted by Jimmie when he spelled out his own name.

"There he goes!" declared Jimmie to himself. "There he is making the letter 'C.' There comes 'A,' and next is 'N.' That is 'Can.' Now here comes 'U;' 'Can You.' Here is 'G,' 'E,' 'T.' 'Can You Get—.' Now he says 'A,' 'W,' 'A,' 'Y.' That's 'Away.' Can I get away? Not very handy with all these

Germans about. Guess I'll have to tell him something myself. Here goes."

Accordingly Jimmie began a reply in the same code. He briefly informed Ned that he understood the regiment was to go west, probably to Verdun, where Jimmie had heard that heavy fighting was taking place. He also stated that he was unable to escape in daylight, but that he would try to do so after nightfall.

In response to this wig-wagging Ned began to give directions for their co-operation in an attempt at escape by Jimmie, when suddenly he discerned a soldier creeping up behind his red-headed friend.

Instantly he gave the well-known danger signal and tried to tell Jimmie that someone was near. For some strange reason the lad failed to comprehend the information given, and not until it was too late did he realize that it was himself who was in danger.

Intently watching Ned and trying to interpret the signals being made by the older boy, Jimmie did not observe the footsteps of the approaching soldier. Suddenly he felt an arm thrown about his neck. He was drawn irresistably backward by the strong arm that shut off his wind nearly to the choking point.

With all the energy in his lithe young body

the lad tried to kick and strike at his unseen antagonist, but his efforts were unavailing.

For what seemed to the lad countless years the vise-like grasp was maintained upon his windpipe. He began to understand that his struggles were useless, and spent his entire energy in an effort to stiffen the cords of his neck, hoping to assist his breathing by so doing. Presently, as he ceased his struggles, the soldier who had so skillfully captured him set the lad upon his feet.

"So," began the soldier, "think you that we understand not the fact that you are but a spy and that information you are giving to your friends in the city? Yes. It is indeed so."

Jimmie's only reply was a wrinkling of his freckled nose in a grimace of extreme disgust and contempt. Even had he been so minded, the condition of his wreched neck and strained muscles prevented sprightly conversation. He winked rapidly to clear his tear-filled eyes, and indulged in another wrinkling of the nose.

"So," continued the other, paying no heed to Jimmie's motions of contempt. "And this is why we have not had better success in our campaign. We must fight not only the enemy in their trenches, but we must also contend with traitors in our own camps!"

"Who's a traitor?" demanded Jimmie in a belligerent tone.

"Your name I know not," answered the soldier, "but the red hair and the active nose, with its habit of turning up toward the sky, would be identification enough without a name. I need no name."

"Well, you haven't any name so far as I know," was the lad's impertinent response. "And I don't want to get acquainted with you."

"The subject we will not change," was the cool rejoinder of the German. "We just now are discussing your giving information to the other Russian spies down there in the city. You will not need a name after to-morrow, or possibly after this evening, if Herr Captain von Liebknecht is as zealous in the service of the Kaiser as he has been. If I were giving orders, you would be shot now."

"Well," began Jimmie, pursuing the subject, "I'm not shot yet and you're not shot, but in the language of the little old United States you certainly act like a fellow just about half-shot."

"Half-shot?" inquired the German in a puzzled manner. "How can a man be half-shot? He would then be only kerwundete."

"You and I are getting on famously, Old

Man," Jimmie observed, half laughing. "From all appearances you'd like to stand me up against a wall at sunrise and I'd like to see you in Halifax."

"Halifax?" queried the soldier. "You speak of strange places."

"Well, all right," Jimmie replied. "I guess we'd better be going now, so I'll get my bucket from the place where I dumped its contents into the ditch and we will go back to camp. I hold no resentment against you for your harsh treatment of me, especially since you weigh just about three times as much as I do."

"The bucket will do well enough where it is," came the answer in a low tone, cold as ice. "Just now you will appear before the Captain. Do you not know you are under arrest?"

"Under arrest?" puzzled Jimmie. "Who's pinching me?"

"Ach! Ach!" protested the soldier, raising his hands in a gesture of despair. "What a strange person! What a strange language!"

"You're quite right there," Jimmie said, "and if I had my way we'd be stranger still. Yes," he added, "I think we'd be still strangers. That would just about suit me to perfection."

"Come on, now," the German ordered, with

a trace of impatience tinging his phlegmatic manner. "Long enough we have waited."

"I'm willing," said Jimmie, turning upon his heel. "We might as well get the trouble off our minds. If I'm to be shot for keeps I hope they'll do it soon and do a good job while they're at it."

Although the boy's manner was light and buoyant enough to deceive even the experienced and hardened Uhlan who had constituted himself captor, his heart was heavy, for he well understood the danger of his position. He could hope for little nursing from the peculiar German minds with which he had to cope. Appearances certainly were against him, and he knew that the evidence would be taken only at face value.

Resolved, however, to make the most of a bad bargain, the boy resolutely forced a smile to his freckled face and bore himself erect and with apparent fearlessness as the two neared camp.

No time was lost by the soldier who had Jimmie in charge. He went directly to the spot where Captain von Liebknecht's tent was pitched. A sentry paced up and down the narrow limits of his beat, carrying his rifle in the prescribed position. In accordance with regulations, he was equipped with his full outfit,

including a vicious looking sword bayonet and bandoliers of cartridges that gave forth a silent message which to Jimmie's troubled mind spelled a most gloomy and forbidding prospect for the immediate future.

A challenge from the sentry halted the pair until the necessary questions and answers could be exchanged. Upon being convinced that Jimmie's conductor had an urgent message for the Captain, the sentry ordered them to remain where they were while he hailed the guard stationed inside the tent. To this individual the sentry explained the reason for the visit and the request for an interview.

Jimmie was not left long in doubt. Almost instantly, it seemed, the guard returned and, after exchanging a few words in a low tone with the sentry, beckoned for the soldier and the lad to follow.

He led the way into the tent, raising the flap for Jimmie and his captor to pass. More than ever the lad felt his appellation of The Wolf was well deserved. It seemed to him that circumstances were conspiring to make him seem to the Germans a predatory animal, and while he would have been willing and was even anxious to dispel this notion from their minds, he well understood that nothing he could do or say would be of effect in this direction. Feel-

ing keenly the need of most careful handling of the situation, Jimmie glanced quickly and furtively about the tent. He was somewhat surprised to observe there a number of officers of the regiment apparently in conference.

A number of papers, amongst them maps, was spread upon the little table in the center of the tent. Captain von Liebknecht had patently been directing certain movements of troops, using the maps to further explain his instructions. Jimmie's entrance had interrupted the Captain's action of tracing with his finger the line of railroad leading from Peremysl, or Przemysl, as it must henceforth be known.

As the Captain raised his eyes to observe who his visitors might be, Jimmie let his glance fall to the map, where he saw the finger pointing at the town designated as Cracow.

In a flash the boy realized that von Liebknecht had been giving instructions for the transportation of troops by rail, and that Cracow would be the next stopping point, where he guessed that the horses would be detrained for water and rest if possible.

Mentally making a note of this fact, Jimmie raised his glance fearlessly to meet the cold blue eyes of the German officer. In that glance Jimmie comprehended the fact that he could

expect little mercy from a man whose whole ambition in life seemed to be unquestioning and unwavering devotion to his Emperor. He read also in the blue eyes craft and skill in diplomacy and a keen intelligence withal.

"Captain," began the soldier who had brought Jimmie to the tent, "this Cossack has been giving information to his Russian friends."

Jimmie detected without any difficulty the implied sneer in the term "Cossack," but forebore making any reply on the instant.

"So?" observed von Liebknecht. "Again? Must we always be troubled at critical times with this wonderful recruit?"

As none of the group seemed able to reply, silence was the only response. The Captain let his glance wander about from one to another of his aides. His eyes rested for a moment upon the countenance of a member of the group apparently older than the others.

An almost imperceptible shake of the head answered the questioning glance. For some reason The Wolf felt a sense of relief.

"What have you to say for yourself, young man?" asked the Captain.

"I guess I said enough before I enlisted," answered Jimmie.

"Yet you have now some secret information," demanded the other.

"No, sir," protested the lad in wide-eyed amazement.

"No?" queried von Liebknecht in his accustomed level tones. "Then what is it you have in that little packet you took from the Cossack uniform at so great a cost as a burned hand?" he added.

Involuntarily Jimmie's hand clutched at his breast.

CHAPTER VIII

FRUSTRATED PLANS

"Good night!" was David's ejaculation as the boys saw Jimmie at the hilltop being captured by the German. "That ends it, I suppose!"

"No," protested Ned, "it just begins the work. Up to now we have been only playing, but here's where the real work starts."

"What do you mean—'real work'?" was Jack's anxious inquiry.

"Why," replied Ned, "they've got Jimmie enlisted in that Uhlan regiment, and you can plainly see how closely they are watching him. If we get him away from those fellows it means real work for all."

"Aw! Go on!" put in Harry. "I move we go back to the cellar and get a bunch of those Russian rifles with sufficient ammunition, fill the tanks of the Eagle with some of this gasoline, get aboard a lot of canned goods and swoop down on the German camp like a hawk after some chickens. We can let down a trapeze for Jimmie to grab onto."

"Sounds easy, doesn't it?" remarked David with a short laugh.

"Easy?" questioned Harry. "You don't seem to know Jimmie very well or you would mean just what you say. He can do it all right!"

"But, I say," replied David, "wouldn't those German soldiers be on the alert when we approached? Wouldn't they jolly well shoot us full of holes, and wouldn't they make it rather difficult that way?"

"Now, see here, Dave," argued Harry, "if you could have seen Jimmie when he rescued Havens, the aviator, in British Columbia by dropping from our aeroplane to that of Havens by means of a single rope, you wouldn't think the trick so very impossible."

"Of course," admitted David, "I have no doubt your friend is a wonder, although I have never met him. It is not so much his ability I question as it is the possibility of our getting to him without being detected by the Germans. My word, that is a big task."

"Evidently there are a number of things you don't know," returned Harry, it must be said in a somewhat boastful manner. "We'll have to introduce you to Mr. Ned Nestor, the champion aviator of the Wolf Patrol of New York City. And," the boy added, "that

means, of course, the United States. He is some aviator, I tell you!"

"Why didn't you make it the world while you were at it?" asked Jack quizzically, regarding Harry with an amused smile.

"Well, I guess I wouldn't have been far wrong at that," contended Harry with a glance of pride in Ned's direction. "As the Irishman would say, Ned has 'a way wid him,' and you know it as well as I do."

"I'll not be the last one to admit that Ned certainly can coax an aeroplane into doing stunts that seem marvelous, but I agree with Dave here that unless our chum has some way of striking the Germans blind and deaf we have a mighty slim chance of picking Jimmie up."

Harry's glance of contempt at his comrade was withering in the extreme. So great was his faith in Ned's ability that he would not have hesitated at anything, no matter what the conditions.

"I move," Harry went on, "that we cut out this argument, rob the Russian cache back there in the cellar, and make ourselves scarce around here while the 'beating' still remains in good condition."

"I second the motion," added Ned, "so far as the matter of getting out of Peremysl is con-

cerned. We can take up the other matter later on."

"Those in favor say 'Aye'," said Jack, turning upon his heel and starting back toward the base of supplies the boys had discovered under the pilotage of young Gilmore, the Vancouver Moose.

"The 'Ayes' have it!" announced Harry, preparing to follow his chum. "What do you need most, Ned, and what will you have first?"

"Well, I guess we need something to eat, and a little more gasoline wouldn't go so bad," stated Ned, picking up one of the empty vessels in which gasoline had been brought to the Eagle.

"Sure enough!" cried Jack. "I clean forgot the gasoline business. Watch me give an imitation of a Boy Scout carrying water for the elephant, only in this case the elephant happens to be an 'Eagle'."

In spite of the seriousness of the situation in which the boys found themselves, David could not repress a laugh of merriment and appreciation of the light-hearted manner in which Harry and Jack met the difficulties and dangers surrounding the little party.

"I say, lads," he began, as the four boys took their way carefully from the site on which the Eagle rested toward the underground cav-

ern they had recently quitted, "there's plenty for us in that storeroom, and all we need to do is help ourselves. If only we are not interrupted by some of the Germans patrolling the town, we will be all right."

"Let me get my hands on one perfectly good shooting iron, with some cartridges," stated Jack, "and it will go pretty hard with any German who endeavors to stop us before we get good and going!"

"Now, Jack," protested Ned, "that 'shooting iron' business will have to be postponed, I'm afraid, until such time as we are more nearly out of the woods than we are just now. It wouldn't be quite the thing."

"Oh, of course," said Jack in a tone intended to appear sulky, but with a covert wink at Harry, "somebody is always taking the joy out of life. Why can't I just shoot up a few Dutchmen, I'd like to know?"

"Because they might not think it polite," answered Ned seriously. "Besides," he added, "it wouldn't be strictly in accordance with Boy Scout principles, as you yourself will admit."

"Well," observed David with a sigh, "when I consider some of the things that have happened during the last few days and weeks, I am almost ready to admit that I'd like to resign temporarily."

"Why?" asked Ned. "Have the Germans been doing things to you?"

"Well," stated David, "isn't their capture and treatment of Jimmie sufficient to make us want to do things to them?"

"Yes, it is," admitted Ned, "but at the same time we must remember that 'two wrongs never make a right,' and, according to my recollection, number ten of the Boy Scout laws states that a scout is brave and has the courage to face danger in spite of fear, and defeat does not down him."

"Yes," put in Jack, "and number three, which we all know so well, states that a scout must do one good turn to somebody every day."

"Am I to understand that you would not consider shooting a German a good turn?" asked Harry, who was slightly in the lead.

"A good turn to whom?" asked Ned, following closely upon Jack's heels. "Would shooting be a good turn to the 'shootee'?"

"Well, I don't know about that," answered Jack. "I can easily understand how some fellows might consider it a disadvantage."

"My word," put in David, as the little party prepared to descend into the subterranean cavern which they termed their base of supplies, "these poor fellows here are not able to

know whether it's a disadvantage or not. Just look at that poor chap lying there."

As he spoke David pointed toward the form of a Russian soldier lying in a huddled heap upon the stone floor amidst a tangle of debris.

Jack shuddered as he gazed upon the spectacle for an instant.

"I guess I won't want to shoot any Germans," he said. "And I guess that might include other folks besides Germans, too."

"Let's hurry on, boys," urged Ned. "This awful war business will get on my nerves directly. Let's get our supplies and make our getaway."

Luckily for the little party, the German occupants of the defeated city were busily engaged in occupations that required all their attention. Hence the work of provisioning the Eagle was accomplished without untoward incident. In a very short time the boys had succeeded in placing aboard the air craft sufficient fuel and provisions from the abandoned stores to satisfy the demand of even Jack and Harry, who well remembered the hunger with which they had been assailed at the time of their entrance into the stricken war zone.

"Is everything all ready now?" asked Jack, wiping the sweat from his forehead. "Have we got everything we need, Ned?"

"Yes, I think we have everything," Ned replied, glancing quickly but carefully over the mechanism of the giant plane.

"Just one minute, then," urged Jack. "While you're warming up the engine I'll slip back and pick up one of those rifles I saw, for use in case of emergency. Something, you know, might happen."

Ned laughed as Jack darted away. Turning to the others, he said:

"If we're not careful Jack will soon be as bloodthirsty as Jimmie himself. But," he went on, "it might come in handy at that."

Preferring not to use the self-starter, for the sake of quiet, Ned turned an electric switch which controlled a circuit leading to a contrivance designed by Harry for just such an emergency. This delicate piece of mechanism was located at the carburetor, and was called by Harry the "starting stove." Its office was to warm the gasoline to such an extent that it would make vaporization much more rapid than would ordinarily be the case. This would enable the aviator to start his engine without the usual difficulty due to cold fuel.

Scarcely had the electric current warmed the carburetor sufficiently before Jack returned, carrying a rifle, together with a quantity of cartridges. These he bundled into the fuselage.

"All right, boys, get aboard and we will 'get out of town,' as that Montana freight conductor used to say," urged Ned.

David climbed to a seat beside the steering levers, which were in Ned's grasp. Harry found a place beside a quantity of canned goods.

"Beat it, Ned!" cried Jack from his position on the ground. "We're just in time. Here come the German soldiers after us!"

It was even as the boy said. A detachment of soldiers, evidently policing the town, had discovered the activity of the boys in the vicinity of the giant aeroplane and were coming forward to investigate.

Ned stepped on the starting pedal energetically. Current from the storage batteries flowed through the motor, saturating it almost instantly. Ned's foot was pressed upon the cut-out lever, and the resultant roar from the engines precluded absolutely the possibility of further conversation. Like a thing of life the Eagle leaped forward. Ned gave all his attention to the problem of steering.

In an ever-widening circle the Eagle rose above the open space upon which it had rested. Ned lifted his foot from the cut-out lever, throwing the exhaust from the engine through

the specially designed muffler, which was perhaps Harry's greatest pride.

The contrast between the clamor of a moment before and the comparative quiet of the present instant was startling.

In astonishment at the results achieved, David glanced in wonderment and amazement at the fabric which was bearing the boys aloft. Fully able to appreciate superior mechanism, the boy was lost in his examination of the delicate and yet effective machinery.

His glance of approval rested upon Ned and Harry in turn. He looked about to give a friendly nod to Jack. Greatly to his surprise, Jask was not to be seen anywhere in the fuselage. Startled greatly, he turned toward Ned and laid a hand upon the boy's arm.

"Where's Jack?" he cried. "I don't see him anywhere!"

Ned almost precipitated the entire party in a sudden plunge earthward as he turned in response to David's query. For a moment only the boy lost control of the great machine. But that moment was enough to cause the aeroplane to dip swiftly toward the ground.

Before Ned could regain control much of the altitude was lost. In another instant he had again directed the course of their craft toward the open air high above the ruined city. But

the lost distance was sufficient to bring the party within range of the rifles of the German soldiers who had been running toward their location.

A sharp report echoed from below. A whizzing, tearing sound assailed the ears of the lads within the fuselage of the Eagle.

"Pretty close that time," commented Harry with a slight tremble in his voice. "Shall I reply to them, Ned?" he asked.

"Not yet," replied Ned, shaking his head negatively.

Another report from below was heard, followed instantly by the clang of a bullet against metal. A shriek rose from below.

CHAPTER IX

ABANDONING A REGIMENT

In wide-eyed amazement Jimmie stared for a moment at von Liebknecht, not knowing what answer to make to the sudden question. He disliked very much telling the officer the truth concerning the packet he had been to so much trouble to rescue, yet felt that nothing else but the exact truth would serve in the present instance.

For a full minute he glanced about from one to another of the group in the tent. The glances that met his in return were anything but friendly. Some were indifferent, while others scowled fiercely as their resentment against the lad mounted. Evidently all firmly believed that the boy was what he had been accused of being—a spy.

At length resolved to adhere to the truth at whatever cost, Jimmie raised his head to direct his gaze straight into the Captain's eyes.

"That packet," he began in a low tone, "is my own private property. I don't know just what it contains, but it is not contraband."

A faint smile lighted von Liebknecht's usually immobile countenance.

"How, then," he asked, endeavoring to make his voice convey the spirit of friendship he tried to feel for the lad, "can you say that it is not contraband or infer that the packet does not contain information that would be of value to our enemy if you do not know its contents?"

"Because I received it from a man who was dying and who wanted badly to make restitution for some things he had done that were wrong. He had no interest in the dispute between your country and your enemies except to make whatever money he might from the matter."

"You speak in riddles. Please explain more fully."

"Well," Jimmie continued, "there was a man in the United States who brought over a ship load of ammunition. He stole a lot of money intended for the relief of the suffering people of Poland. He kidnapped and shanghaied me and generally proved himself a bad sort. When he got over to Riga he was forced to enlist in the Russian Cossack regiment, the same as I was, and when the Russian Cossacks attacked the German troop train he was wounded badly. I tried to assist him, and did what I could. When he found he was dying he

asked me to take this packet, which I understand contains the keys to a safe deposit box in New York City, and when I get back there he wanted me to see what I could do toward setting right some of his wrongdoings."

"A very fine tale, indeed," was the comment of von Liebknecht, "but you will scarcely expect us to believe that in the face of all the circumstances. We don't mean to imply that you, necessarily, know different, but the man's story as you have told it is improbable."

"I am telling the exact truth as I understand it!" declared Jimmie earnestly. "If he was lying to me, I do not know it. I believe he told the truth, for he understood that he could not live much longer."

"Nevertheless, we will be obliged to examine the contents of the packet," stated von Liebknecht positively. "Is it not so?" he asked, turning to the group of officers for confirmation of his decision.

Vigorous nods from the ones addressed indicated their approval.

Unwilling to submit to the proposed action, Jimmie took a step backward. His action was misinterpreted by the soldier who had captured the boy. With a quick motion the man again seized the red-headed lad in the same manner as previously, and deftly slid his hand

to the pocket where the packet reposed. Before Jimmie could offer any resistance the object sought was brought forth and tossed upon the table.

"Please make a note of the fact," stated von Liebknecht, addressing an orderly seated nearby with a memorandum book, "that the packet is to be opened with the full consent of Herr McGraw."

Jimmie gasped. He began to understand that the records of his presence in the German regiment of Uhlans would be made to show favorably for the officer in command in case anything serious happened. And that something very serious would shortly happen to him the boy did not for a single moment doubt. He felt vaguely uneasy.

With a knife tendered by one of his associates von Liebknecht deftly ripped the stitches that held the wrapping of the tiny packet.

In another moment the oiled silk covering had been removed and an inner wrapping opened. Jimmie leaned forward to gaze upon the contents with as much interest as was displayed by the others.

Presently, when the wrappings had been removed, he saw a key and a folded paper. The key was of the peculiar construction adopted generally by safe deposit vaults for the use of

their patrons. The paper had been prepared evidently for use in case of just the emergency that had overtaken the man who had given it to Jimmie. It was covered with memoranda and figures in very fine writing.

Von Liebknecht scowled as he pored over the document. The memorandum had been made in a fragmentary way, and evidently referred to other documents that would be found in the safe deposit box.

The Captain puzzled over the document for a time, then passed it to the officer nearest him. He then gave his attention to the key.

"What do you make of it?" he asked Jimmie presently, tapping in a nervous manner upon the table with the key. "What does it mean?"

"Just what I told you, I think," Jimmie replied.

"It appears different to me," the Captain objected. "I am of the opinion that it has to do with information concerning the dispute in progress between my country and the enemies. I am sorry, but I shall have to retain the packet for forwarding to headquarters. You will receive it again if it is found to be what you claim. Otherwise—"

He left the sentence unfinished, and Jimmie

waited for a time, expecting him to complete the statement.

"Well, otherwise?" asked the boy half breathlessly.

"Otherwise, we shall see," stated von Liebknecht with a smile.

"And in the meantime?" went on the lad anxiously.

"In the meantime we are preparing to leave for the western theater of war, where we are needed far more than here. You will accompany us with the best grace possible under the circumstances."

"But my comrades?" asked Jimmie, with a slight tremble in his voice. "Will it not be possible to let all four of us return to America?"

"I am sorry," returned the Captain, "but what you ask is impossible."

"Well, then," persisted the lad, "can't we at least let them know where I am and where I am going, so that they won't worry?"

"They are, no doubt, well acquainted with you and your abilities," went on von Liebknecht. "If your capacity for taking care of yourself is equal to your ability to make a disturbance, they should experience no uneasiness on your behalf. Besides," he added, "it

is impossible to communicate with them just now. We do not know where they are."

In spite of the seriousness of his own situation, Jimmie breathed a sigh of relief, for he felt that the information given him was correct, and he interpreted the Captain's statement to mean that the three boys had succeeded in making their escape from the soldiers.

He was, nevertheless, greatly perturbed over the prospect of leaving the immediate vicinity, for he felt that his chances of escape were greatly lessened. He knew that the boys would endeavor to assist him, but, owing to the interrupted code message, he could only guess at how this would be accomplished.

The map, still spread upon the table, gave him a hint. He remembered the fact that von Liebknecht's finger had pointed at Cracow. A firm resolve formed within the boy's breast. He determined that, if his suspicion proved correct and the regiment paused at Cracow, he would make an attempt to escape there. He also decided that if it were at all possible he would advise his chums of the fact.

While Jimmie was turning over these points in his mind a buzz of whispered conversation was going on between the officers around the table. At length a decision was reached, and

von Liebknecht again turned his attention to his newest recruit.

"You may go in company with this man," he said. "He and Otto Freundlich will be given charge of you, and will be required to turn you over to the proper officer upon demand. They will have orders to insist upon your presence at all times, and in order to make sure that you do not attempt to escape they will be given orders to shoot if necessary. I would advise you for your own good not to try to leave the regiment at any time."

"If we are leaving this place and my chums are not here," Jimmie replied, feeling that further argument would accomplish no alteration of the Captain's decision, "I cannot see why I should attempt to escape. You are entirely wrong in supposing that I am trying to get information to the Russians concerning your army."

"Perhaps you are right," assented von Liebknecht, not unkindly. "That is a point that we shall ascertain in our own way. For the present every circumstance is unfavorable for you, and we must be careful. You understand, do you not?" he asked with a slight smile.

"I see how you understand it," the boy said. "Of course, if you choose to look at the facts as

you do, I cannot help it. I don't want to get shot, so I think I'll not try to make a getaway."

"Good!" declared the Captain, apparently greatly relieved. "That makes it easier for us. Now, I shall ask you to assist in getting your equipment ready for the journey. Everybody will be required to work hard if we leave at the time desired."

"Very good, sir," stated the boy, saluting in the approved Boy Scout fashion. "I'll help all I can."

So saying, he turned on his heel and signified to the soldier detailed as his guard that he was ready to leave the place.

"So we are to be comrades for a while at least?" inquired Jimmie pleasantly as the pair left the tent. "We might as well get acquainted before we go farther. My named is Jimmie McGraw. What is yours?"

"Mine iss Frederich von Strassheim," answered the other, apparently feeling no resentment against Jimmie for his kicks and blows delivered during the process of capture. "We shall be well acquainted."

"That's interesting," declared Jimmie. "I thought that the word 'von' was used only for officers and persons of nobility, though."

"The designation 'von,'" answered the other, proudly drawing himself erect, "is used

only by those entitled to it by royal decree. My ancestors distinguished themselves and were of the house of Hohenzollern. That is why I am allowed to use it."

"Oh, so that is it?" mused Jimmie. "All right, von Strassheim, I think that I'll call you Fritz, though, if you don't object."

"Goot; call me Fritz, then!" laughed the soldier. "Great friends we shall be as I can perceive. And may I call you Jimmie?"

"Call me Jimmie, Red-head, The Wolf, Freckles—oh, anything," stated Jimmie with a laugh, in response to the other's good nature, "but," he went on, "for pity's sake don't call me late for eats."

"Mess call iss not yet," responded the other, again resuming his accustomed gravity. "We shall have plenty of time to pack our kits."

"Then let's be about it," suggested the lad. "Where shall we go to make a start, and what shall we do first, and how shall we do it?"

"One at a time—one at a time," protested Fritz. "First we shall go past the place where I found you signalling. Then we shall proceed to the stables and look after our horses."

"And then?" inquired Jimmie interestedly, feeling that any information he might get from Fritz would be useful later on.

"We shall in full marching order break

camp," was the reply. "To the train of cars we will ride, and there put our horses and baggage aboard. Then we start for the west. But here is the exact spot where you were standing when I interrupted your conversation."

"Yes, this is the place," acknowledged Jimmie. "And right over there is the aeroplane of my friends. Oh, look!" the boy cried. "See, they're starting out with it! Great frozen hot boxes! Those other fellows are shooting! Good night!"

CHAPTER X

AN EAGLE'S TALONS

"What's that?" gasped Ned as the cry from beneath the airship reached his ears. "That's too close to come from the ground!"

"It must be Jack!" was Dave's startled exclamation. "He's not in the aeroplane and I can't imagine where he may be!"

"Didn't he get aboard when we started?" queried Ned.

"I thought he did," Harry responded instantly. "I was busy stowing things out of our way, though, and wasn't paying much attention."

"I missed him just a moment ago," stated Dave excitedly. "Where can he have gone? Do you suppose he is captured by the Germans?"

"I hope not," Ned replied. "Maybe he missed getting aboard and is with those fellows down there who are doing the shooting."

"Give me the glasses from that pocket beside you, Dave," requested Harry. "Perhaps I can see the party well enough to distinguish him."

At the instant Harry leaned over the edge of the car for the purpose of getting a better view of the field they had so recently occupied another shot rang out from below. Mingled with the report were shouts and exclamations from several of the soldiers.

As will be remembered distinctly by those of our readers who have had the pleasure of riding in aircraft, sounds from the earth are distinctly heard at a great altitude. In fact, sounds may be distinguished clearly at a much greater distance in a vertical than in a horizontal direction. It was owing to this fact that the shouts from the group below came so clearly to the lads in the Eagle.

"I don't hear Jack's voice amongst the clamor," declare Harry.

"I wonder where he can be?" puzzled Dave, earnestly scanning the vacant space below. "They cannot have hidden him!"

"Suppose we call out and see if we can get a signal from him," suggested Harry. "He would try to answer us, I'm sure."

"Go ahead," Ned agreed. "I'll try a little volplaning and see if we can't get closer to that crowd without getting hit by a bullet."

"Better be careful, Ned," cautioned Dave. "Those fellows are in earnest, I think, and wouldn't stop at anything."

"I'll be careful," was Ned's confident answer. "When you're ready, just yell your heads off for Jack and then watch and listen."

"I'm going to halloo out now," stated Harry, drawing a deep breath.

"Let her go!" urged Ned, manipulating the levers in such a way as to practically check the headway of the slowly moving machine.

"Oh, Ja-a-a-ck!" called Harry at the top of his voice, making a trumpet of his hands. "Oh, Ja-a-a-ack!" he called again.

All three boys were startled to hear the voice of their chum proceeding from a point seemingly directly beneath them.

"Here I am," came Jack's cheery tones, although the boys thought they could detect a slight trace of weariness.

"Where?" cried Ned, greatly surprised at the sudden reply.

"Under the Eagle," replied Jack. "I'm hanging onto a truss rod and can stay here for quite a while if you want to leave the place."

"We surely want to leave the place," answered Ned, reaching again for the levers. "Can you hang on for a few minutes more?"

"I'm all right for a long time," answered Jack bravely, "but I'd just as soon you'd hit up the speed a little."

Ned's guiding touch upon the levers sent the

Eagle forward at a rate of speed that quickly carried the entire party to a distance well out of rifle range from the party below. He was heading for a hill at no great distance from their present location.

"I'll land there," he said, indicating by a nod of his head the eminence toward which they were running. "We ought to be able to help Jack out of his position in a very few minutes."

Harry turned the glasses toward the spot Ned had pointed out.

"Look out, Ned!" he cried almost instantly. "I can see a lot of helmets there that look as if they were German head dresses."

"Can you see the soldiers under the helmets?" asked Dave.

"Not a soldier!" declared Harry. "But," he added, "that doesn't say they're not there. Those uniforms they are wearing blend so closely with the natural colors of the landscape that one can't very well tell whether a German is near or not until he feels the cloth."

"Or the bullet," put in Dave with a grimace toward the hill.

"We're getting nearer all the while," Ned said. "Keep your eyes open, and if there are soldiers there we'll go somewhere else."

For a moment Harry intently studied the

spot they were fast approaching. With the glasses in position he scanned every foot of ground carefully, not omitting the slightest detail.

"I'm sure I see them now," he stated positively as he lowered the glasses. "We're in a nice mess with Jack hanging under this ship simply by one of the truss rods. We've got to rescue him!"

"What can we do?" asked Dave, at a loss to solve the difficulty.

"I'll tell you what we'll do!" cried Harry. "I'm the lightest of the party, so I'll go down and get him! I can do it!"

"Harry, are you crazy?" questioned Ned chidingly. "It's impossible!"

"No, it's not!" stoutly maintained the boy. "He's there, and we've simply got to get him. We can't land anywhere hereabouts, and by the time we can land he'll be exhausted and will have dropped."

"How will you do it?" asked Dave. "Let me help."

"I guess you'll have to do most of the work," replied Harry, reaching into one of the lockers, from which he drew a coil of light line.

"Not if you go under the fuselage to get Jack," objected Dave.

"Yes, sir!" continued Harry. "When I get

down there you'll have to do all the work of engineering the deal. You'll have to do a whole lot of pulling and hauling, and you'll have to run out on one side to balance the machine. Mustn't have the ship list too much!"

"Oh, I see!" was Dave's response. "And," he continued, "I won't be able to see where you are, because you'll be on the opposite side from my own position. How shall we manage?"

"Well, here's my plan," Harry went on rapidly, as he began overhauling the coil of line. "When I get out on one side I'll go along the framework, of course. You'll be on the opposite side to balance. Then when you see that the machine is tipping your way you are to get nearer the center of gravity so as to stabilize the affair."

"I undestand," Dave replied, eagerly entering into the spirit of the work. "And when I feel the machine tip away from me I'll go out farther along the framework so as to again equalize the flight."

"Exactly. Now, it will be a hard job for us to get this line passed under the framework so that we can get a purchase and pull it to Jack. I can't reach that far, and Jack probably is hanging on with his hands, feet and eyelids, so he can't let go with one hand even."

"I'll tell you how we can fix that," Dave suggested.

"How?" inquired Harry, ready at all times to consider any suggestions and act upon them if they seemed better than the ones he had made.

"Let's take a loop of the line and fasten it around my body under my arms. You can be inside the machine paying out slack as I need it. I can take a similar loop and by crawling under the machine I can reach Jack all right and pass the loop about his body. Then you can haul in slack bit by bit as he crawls along the truss rod to the side of the fuselage. In that way there will be practically no danger, for the loop of line about our bodies will prevent our falling if we should slip."

"Much obliged!" was Harry's acknowledgment of the suggestion. "But," he went on, "I think it would be better for me to do the work."

"Excuse me for insisting," Dave said in a modest manner, "but I am quite sure that I am better fitted than you. My work in the Northwest has always required considerable work with my arms, and besides that I am pretty well developed about the arms and shoulders. I don't want to discredit your ability, but I'm sure, don't you know, that I am stronger than

you and could do the work better. You'll let me try, won't you? Really, you know, you ought to let me help!"

"It's not to your discredit at all, Harry," put in Ned, "that Dave has larger muscles than you and is perhaps stronger. This is a job that requires all the muscle possible, so I think we'd better let him try it. We must get Jack out of that place as quickly as possible."

"All right," agreed Harry reluctantly, for he very much disliked to permit anyone but himself to even attempt the rescue of his chum.

Dave lost no time in tying a bowline in a bight at the two ends of the length of line. One of these he passed over his own body. The other he took in his teeth. In another moment he was over the side of the car, while Harry did his best to balance the Eagle as he had planned for Dave to do, at the same time paying out line as it was needed.

Presently the lad felt the machine tipping slightly in his direction and knew that Dave had succeeded in reaching the level of the bottom of the car and was crawling along the truss rod underneath.

For a short space of time the two boys in the car anxiously waited. Harry's patience at length was exhausted, and he called out:

"Have you found Jack, Dave? Is he there all right?"

"Yes, he's here and he's all right, but rather tired."

"Can I help any?" was Harry's next question.

"Not a bit just now. Jack is getting ready to make the climb. Stand by the line that I am going to jerk. Haul in slowly."

Bit by bit the line came aboard with its human freight in the loop at the end. Harry was exceedingly careful to haul in very slowly, in order that he might not trip his chum and cause a disaster. In a few moments that seemed endless ages to Ned and Harry their comrade's head showed and the Eagle again took a tilt to starboard.

Harry quickly and carefully crawled to a position where he would balance the unusual side strain. He relaxed his vigilance not one whit, however, and hauled in carefully and slowly on the line.

"Well, that's over with!" sighed Jack as he tumbled over the side of the car to a position of safety. "I'm glad it's ended, too!"

"How did it happen?" queried Harry with keen interest.

"Never mind the details just yet," panted Jack, stretching his shaking arms and working

his fingers to restore the circulation that had been somewhat impeded because of the tense muscles. "Let's get Dave up here safely first. That's one plucky Scout!" the boy added.

"Right you are!" declared Harry. "I'd almost forgotten him!"

"All right, Dave," called Ned, giving the levers a touch to bring the Eagle clear of some treetops on a rise of ground. "Coming up?"

"In just a minute," replied Dave from his position. "I'm resting easily, and I think I see the camp where your comrade is located. Do you suppose we might pick him up as we fly over the place?"

"That would be a riskv and nervy thing to do!" declared Ned.

"Nothing so risky about it that I can see," protested Dave. "I'm all right here, and if you'll pass that line down I'll try to manage to drop the loop where he can get it if we find the right spot."

"I believe Jimmie could do it?" cried Harry enthusiastically.

"All right," assented Ned, "we can't any more than fail!"

Although the feat that the boys proposed attempting would call for considerable skill, and was certainly not lacking in danger to all parties, they were not daunted. They had deter-

mined to rescue their friend at whatever cost and knew that ordinary means would prove useless.

"Can you see Jimmie anywhere about that camp?" asked Ned, again handing the glasses to Harry. "Take a good look," he advised.

"I believe I can see him!" announced Harry, peering through the binoculars. "He's walking out toward the edge of the hill toward the same spot from which he signalled to us. Some one's with him!"

"Then we'll try it?" determinedly Ned continued.

For a few moments the boys rode in absolute silence with only the whine of the motors breaking the stillness. The Eagle was working perfectly with not a single hitch about the delicate mechanism.

As they approached the two Uhlands Ned slackened the speed of the motors. Dave dangled the extra loop in a tempting manner.

A rifle shot was heard. The Eagle rose suddenly relieved of weight.

CHAPTER XI

THE FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE

"Suppose so?" questioned Fritz as Jimmie made his announcement that the Germans were shooting at the persons in the aeroplane.

"Well, suppose so!" repeated Jimmie indignantly. "Why do you say 'Suppose so'? Where do you get that idea?"

A shrug of the shoulders was the only answer.

"I say," continued Jimmie with still less patience, "what's the big idea—'suppose so'? Do you want them to shoot those boys?"

"I care not," was the answer. "The ones in the aeroplane are trying to escape are they not? Why, then, should they not come back?"

"Well, why shouldn't they get away?" questioned Jimmie.

"Perhaps they have information for your friends, the Russians!"

"Oh, you give me a fine large pain!" stormed the now thoroughly aroused lad. "Every time you see a shadow, you jump on it for a spy. Is your old information so precious that nobody

must know it? What makes you so suspicious of everybody and everything?"

"It is not right that the enemy should have knowledge of the movements of the Imperial army," replied Fritz. "That is all."

"And that's quite enough to make me feel that I'd like to be a spy once just for pure spite!" declared Jimmie. "You and your spy business make me tired! We Boy Scouts don't care a rap about your old information!"

"Perhaps," was the smiling response. But Jimmie saw in the smile and the single word a doubt of his statement. He was furious.

He realized, however, that he could gain nothing by a loss of temper. It was with a great effort that he controlled his temper and forced himself to watch the flight of the aeroplane. Deep in his heart the boy was hoping ardently for the success of those in the machine, for he was now fully convinced that it was Ned and his comrades who had attempted the flight. He watched every movement with great interest.

When he saw the figure of his friend hanging to the truss rod beneath the Eagle, Jimmie's heart almost stopped beating, so great was his anxiety for the other's safety. As the sound of the rifle shots reached his ears the lad turned away his head, for he did not in the

least doubt that the marksmen had been successful.

When he again looked toward the speeding plane he danced with joy, for he saw the figure still clinging to its perilous position and knew that by great good fortune the chum he loved so dearly was unharmed.

Both Jimmie and Fritz gazed eagerly toward the soaring plane, and observed with great interest the movements incident to Jack's rescue.

"Ha!" ejaculated Fritz, drawing a deep breath, as the two saw that Jack had regained the deck of the Eagle. "He's a plucky boy!"

"You bet he's a plucky boy!" replied Jimmie, condescending to administer a friendly slap upon the Uhlan's shoulder. "They don't make 'em any more so! And he's a Boy Scout, too!" he added.

"But there is still another boy under the machine," observed Fritz.

"Oh, he'll get out all right!" was Jimmie's confident answer. "You'll have to go some with your whole army to beat four Boy Scouts!"

"Maybe," admitted Fritz with another smile. "But I see that your friends are heading this way. Perhaps they intend paying you

a little visit before we start to Verdun," he added.

"They sure are headed this way," the lad said. "And the fellow underneath is riding that way on purpose. I wonder why?"

"Who can tell why a boy does anything?" was Fritz's comment.

"I can tell you why Boy Scouts do a great many things," declared Jimmie vehemently. "They do the things that are right and square because it is best and because they are living up to the rules of conduct that they are taught. That's why they do those things!"

"And do the Boy Scout rules teach them to be spies?"

"Now you're talking through your hat again!" was the lad's answer. "Can't you ever get it out of your head that we are not interested in your war? We don't want to mix up in your private scraps."

Fritz wagged his head sagely and smiled in a manner that spoke more eloquently than words of his disbelief in Jimmie's protestations.

"All right," continued the boy, "you don't have to believe it if you don't want to, but if you live long enough we'll show you!"

"You say 'We,' " responded the soldier. "It would appear that you expect your friends to join you presently for some enterprise."

"Well, it looks as if they expect to come pretty close to this place, whether I expect them to or not," observed Jimmie, turning his eyes toward the approaching plane and shading his eyes with a hand.

"We shall return to the stables," decided Fritz. "Come."

A movement of the Uhlan attracted Jimmie's attention. The lad saw a glint of steel and wheeled to observe the erstwhile peaceable man turned into an entirely different sort of individual, with his short saber held in his hand in a threatening manner.

For a moment the boy contemplated flight. An instant's reflection, however, showed him the folly of such an attempt. He knew that, although he was fleet of foot and believed that he could easily outrun the other, he would be no match for a bullet if one should be sent after him. Besides, he saw that his friends could not possibly reach him with the plane if he should leave the elevated position on which he stood.

Concluding that his only hope of escape lay in patient waiting, the lad turned reluctantly from his position and prepared to accompany Fritz as he had been directed. He felt that he was giving up the only certain means of get-

ting away from the regiment he now thoroughly hated.

"Gee!" he exclaimed petulantly, stepping forward a pace. "It seems as if the whole bloomin' German army was determined that I should get mixed up in the war! First it's von Liebknecht and now it's you and Otto keeping after me, and I never did a thing to any of you!"

"No?" queried Fritz. "But you do not say what you would like to do or what you would do if you had the opportunity."

"All right; you win the argument!" said Jimmie in a hopeless tone.

"Then we go now to care for the horses and prepare for the trip to Verdun," decided Fritz, with a twist of the keen blade he held.

Entertaining visions of what might happen if Fritz became too careless in his attentions with the saber, Jimmie cast a last look over his shoulder at the rapidly approaching airship. He again took a hesitating step toward the German, as if to accompany him.

Fritz, believing that Jimmie was preparing to follow without further parley, began replacing his saber in its scabbard. For an instant his attention was concentrated on the task in hand.

That instant was enough for the alert boy.

With a sudden leap forward he threw his weight into a low tackle and clasped his arms about the other's legs. Both came heavily to earth.

Jimmie, having the advantage, was first to rise. As he jumped to his feet he again turned to look for the oncoming plane.

The hum of the motors was plainly discernable. He thought he could even hear a sharp command given by one of the boys in charge.

Almost overhead he saw the great wings outspread and knew that he had been sighted and that his comrades were trying to afford him the opportunity of escape he so much desired.

One glance revealed the strange lad clinging to a perilous seat on the truss rod. With one hand the newcomer was balacing himself, while with the other he was shaking out into plain view the noose trailing at the end of a line hanging from the under side of the plane.

His actions clearly indicated that he wanted Jimmie to prepare to grasp the loop and be drawn up to the airship as they rose above the camp of Germans. Jimmie needed no second invitation.

Without paying the slightest heed to the efforts of Fritz to right himself from the undignified position into which Jimmie's onslaught had placed him, the lad dashed forward to a

point from which he thought he could most advantageously grasp the trailing loop.

Nearer and nearer came the dangling line. The boy, under the extreme excitement of the moment, began to imagine the feel of the rope in his hands, and reviewed the motions he would have to make in order to seize the line and be drawn up to his comrades.

He gave a brief thought of thankfulness to the gymnasium training Ned Nestor had so consistently urged upon the members of his patrol, and flexed his biceps in anticipation of the strain they were to receive.

Ned seemed to be handling the Eagle with consummate skill. He had brought the machine to an altitude that was nicely calculated to afford Jimmie just the opportunity needed without trailing the line upon the ground, yet not having it out of the lad's reach.

So absorbed were all the lads that they had not observed the activity about the German camp caused by the approach of the aeroplane. They failed to see several marksmen running toward their position with rifles ready for instant use and with determination upon their faces.

For the moment the lads seemed to forget that they were approaching a camp of men who suspected them of being Russian spies and who

would hesitate at nothing to prevent their carrying out their designs.

Nearer and nearer swept the Eagle with her strange purpose. At length Jimmie's hand was outstretched to grasp the loop of line Dave had so cunningly fashioned. He started on a run in the same direction the airship was going, for the purpose of lessening the shock of being picked up from a standstill by the airship that was still moving at a good speed. He felt the rope within his hand, and then he heard a shot.

Instantly realizing that their maneuver had been discovered, the lad knew that the soldiers would endeavor by every means within their power to frustrate the designs of himself and comrades. Yet he was determined to make the attempt at escape, desperate though it was.

He felt himself lifted from his feet, and knew that his grasp on the rope was all that was keeping him from being dashed to earth again.

Another rifle shot rang out, and the boy knew that the Germans were preparing to concentrate their fire upon himself and comrades.

This time he heard the crash of a bullet as it ripped its way through one of the wings of the Eagle.

In another instant the lad saw by a quick

glance earthward that the Eagle was not rising rapidly enough to get away from the cluster of tents toward which it was heading. He knew that Ned was doing all possible to so manipulate the wings of the monster craft that the tents would be cleared, and hoped ardently that he might be able to do so.

As the Eagle began a sloping ascent that promised to accomplish the purpose of its pilot another rifle in the hands of a German soldier spoke its sharp command and another bullet sped toward the little party.

A clang of lead upon the metal under part of the fuselage told Jimmie, hanging in midair, that the last marksman had been more successful than his companions, and he hoped that no damage was done.

His surprise was indeed great to feel a great trembling and shaking of the rope he grasped. He glanced upward to determine the cause.

His astonishment at observing Dave slipping down the rope was so great that he nearly loosed his own grip.

Lower and lower came the other boy until he reached the knot of the loop he had tied for Jimmie's benefit. There he hung a moment. Jimmie looked toward the earth again and saw that they were nearly over the tents. Mentally deciding that they would clear the tops, the lad

again glanced aloft to observe the strange boy.

It seemed that coincidentally with another shot the Eagle suddenly jumped miles high into the sky. Then he found himeslf bumping about with the strange lad in a world of canvas with several other people.

By a strange freak of fortune the last shot had severed the rope by which the two boys clung to the airship and had precipitated them straight onto the tent. There they floundered for a time.

"Ha!" Jimmie heard as he opened his eyes. "Another recruit!"

CHAPTER XII

TEMPTATIONS

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Harry excitedly, grasping a portion of the framework of the Eagle to assist in keeping his balance as the great plane shot skyward. "What's coming off here, anyhow?"

"What's the matter, Ned?" gasped Jack with equal astonishment.

Ned was too busy, however, just at that moment to give a suitable reply to the queries. The antics of the Eagle were occupying all his attention, and he made extreme efforts to prevent the craft and its freight from being dashed to an ignominious end in the midst of the camp of Germans who had succeeded in making a prisoner of Jimmie.

Instinctively the lad knew that something had happened to the boys beneath the machine, although at the moment he was unable to see just what calamity had befallen them.

With a great leap the Eagle soared away from the camp amidst the humming of bullets from the rifles of the angry Uhlans, who fired

rapidly but without proper aim. Accustomed as they were to shooting at targets on a level with themselves, they found it an entirely different proposition to properly aim their weapons when their quarry was at some distance above the earth.

Several of the missiles, however, struck the fuselage and wings of the Eagle, causing considerable alarm. The boys were devoutly thankful that none of the leaden messengers struck a vital part.

"Whew!" breathed Harry as the Eagle drew away from the scene. "We didn't have much margin that time, I declare!"

"I guess that next time we go through a German camp we'll just hang an anchor out overboard and hook up everything we can as we pass," suggested Jack, peering back at the camp they had just left.

"Better get Dave out of his perilous position as soon as we can," put in Harry, remembering their new-found friend who had done such valiant service. "He'll be tired by this time, with all this rough riding and bouncing about we have been giving him."

"Yes," added Jack with interest, "you certainly started upward with the little old Eagle going on two wheels. You're some driver, Ned."

"Let's make ready to help him out," persisted Harry.

"No use," objected Ned, shaking his head disconsolately, "he isn't there. I'm sure he dropped off back there at camp."

"What!" cried Harry in amazement. "Why do you think that?"

"Well, from the sudden way in which the Eagle's progress was checked, I'm sure that Jimmie caught the loop of line all right," was Ned's answer. "Then," he went on, "from the way in which the craft shook just before she jumped skyward, I believe that the two boys were in some sort of difficulty. All at once we began to climb, and that indicated to me clearly that a considerable weight had been lost."

"Do you mean to say you think both Jimmie and Dave fell?"

"I can't see any other way out of it," declared Ned.

"Well, of all things!" was Harry's expression as the truth of the matter began to dawn upon him. "What shall we do now?"

"I move we circle back in a big spiral," stated Jack, "and see if we can see what's going on there. Maybe the boys are hurt."

"We weren't going high enough for the drop to badly injure either of them," declared

Harry. "Unless they were tangled in the rope, they have landed upside down with care, all right."

"Jimmie will come out of any mixup with his fists doubled up," was Jack's almost laughing comment. "I believe that if that chap were to fall into the hopper of a mud scow he'd come out with a clean shirt on and a smile all over that freckled face of his."

"Yes, and ready to fight the chap that pushed him in," added Ned.

"Then let's get back there and see what we can see," urged Harry.

"Better not swing too close," advised Jack. "We can't tell what tricks those fellows may have up their sleeves. They weren't prepared for our sudden coming, and so failed to get us. Next time, though, they may be more fortunate and we might get somthing not wanted."

"What do you think, Ned," questioned Harry.

"I think it would be unwise to go back there too close now," was Ned's advice. "I'm of the opinion that our attempt to take Jimmie away had a bad effect on them, and that they're quite angry."

"Well, swing around a ways and let us take a peep through the glasses. Maybe we can see what's going on back there."

Accordingly Ned, in an effort to appease the curiosity of his chums, brought the Eagle in a wide spiral to a position about three thousand feet above the camp and a trifle to the westward. From this point of vantage the lads could clearly see the camp within the range of their field glasses. Jack nearly danced with joy as he looked.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. "I can see a group about one of the tents that looks all flattened out. I'll bet that Jimmie landed on top of the tent and broke it down. They're standing in the middle of the group there, and seem to be surrounded by officers."

"Then the rest is easy," commented Ned, giving a touch of the levers that carried the Eagle away on a straight flight to the westward.

"Easy?" queried Harry. "What do you mean—easy?"

"Why, they'll be taking train right away for the western front, unless we're badly mistaken," answered Ned. "All we have to do is to leave them alone for a few days until they arrive at the front, and there we can help Jimmie and Dave to escape."

"You figure that by that time the Germans will have forgotten us?"

"Either that or they'll have other things to think of."

"Then let's beat it out of this neighborhood," suggested Harry.

"Wait a minute," urged Jack. "What do you suppose they'll do to the boys if we leave them there? Won't they try to take out their spite on the lads and go to extreme measures?"

"I hardly think so," argued Ned, tilting the planes to bring the Eagle a trifle closer to the earth. "In the first place, I think the officers will want to keep the two lads for the amusement of the soldiers. It will give them something to think about for a few days."

"Yes, the two boys will amuse the soldiers, all right!" declared Jack. "But what will happen to the two boys meanwhile?"

"That's what I'm coming to," went on Ned. "I figure that they will not be willing to see harm come to the lads through the Germans directly, because it would make trouble between the German nation and ours and that of Dave. They may make the lads go into the front lines when they get to the front, and if they should get hit by a bullet from one of their own countrymen the situation would be different."

"I see," reflected Harry. "Then in that case the Germans could claim they were not

directly responsible. They might claim that the boys got enthusiastic and enlisted voluntarily. If they got shot it was no fault of the dear, kind Germans!" he finished sarcastically.

"Well, that's about the way of it, I guess," answered Ned. "Anyhow," he added, "I'm not a bit afraid for the boys' safety until Verdun is reached. After that I'm not at all so sure as I'd like."

"Then I agree that it's best that we just hit it up for the west."

"Right-o!" cried Jack. "Let's get out of town, as that freight conductor used to say. And let's be quick about it."

"We'll be in plenty of time if we just jog along easily and save any undue strain on the machine," advised Ned. "We'd better be on the lookout for something to eat instead of worrying about speed."

"We can eat some of this canned goods we put aboard back there in Peremysl," suggested Harry. "I'm getting a little bit hungry now."

"Then don't eat anything until you're good and hungry," Ned put in with a smile. "We can't tell where we'll be apt to get anything after this present supply is exhausted."

"Then I won't eat just now," agreed Harry. "I'm not so hungry."

Ned's laugh at the other's reply went far to

break the spell of melancholy that rested upon the group after they had discovered the loss of their comrades. Truly they needed a bit of cheering, for the situation was anything but pleasant and hopeful.

"I see a little village off there to the right a piece," said Jack presently. "We'd better find a favorable landing spot not far from the town pretty soon, for it's coming on dark and we'll be unable to see without showing searchlights that would expose ourselves."

"You're right, I believe," Ned said. "We'd better land."

"All right, then," agreed Harry. "Let's come down easy, though."

Under Ned's capable hands the Eagle swooped silently and swiftly toward the earth. The great machine behaved splendidly in every particular. All three boys craned their necks eagerly toward the earth as they descended. With watchful eyes they peered about.

In another five minutes they were standing beside the Eagle, which rested easily in a grassy spot beneath some tall trees that screened the lads from the eyes of anyone passing upon the road.

Their flight through the twilight had been apparently unobserved, for no outcry from the nearby village had reached their ears.

For a few minutes the three lads stood peering anxiously forth from a screen of bushes that separated them from the highway.

At length Ned signalled his comrades to follow, and cautiously stepped forth from the copse. The others were close upon this heels.

"Let's go to the village," offered Ned, "and try to find out just where we are. Then we can know what to do next."

"Go ahead!" agreed Jack and Harry in chorus.

Ned walked down the road a few paces, then turned to look back at the spot where they had come through the bushes. He examined carefully the shrubbery, and stood a short time examining the outline of the trees and larger growth, carefully noting the contour.

"Getting a landmark for use when you return?" asked Harry.

"That's just it!" laughed Ned. "Never can tell, you know," he went on in mock seriousness. "Might have to come back in a hurry!"

Laughingly the three then proceeded on their way into the town.

They had not far to go, and were congratulating themselves upon the fact that the village seemed almost deserted, when a man stepped into the road from the deep shadow of a low building.

"Halt!" challenged the newcomer. "Who goes there?"

"A friend!" was Ned's instant answer.

"Advance for examination, friend!" came the next command.

The boys stepped forward wonderingly, not understanding the cause for the man's challenge nor who he might be.

"Germans again, I'll bet!" whispered Harry as they proceeded.

"What town is this?" inquired Ned as the three approached the spot where their challenger stood. "We are lost and would like help."

"Ah, then you have come to the right place," the other said in a pleasant tone. "We can surely help you to find yourself, and also can give you a little lift upon your journey. Which way do you go?"

"We want to get to the United States," Ned answered. "We have a little work to do over here first, and would like to know just where we are now. It will help us to get located correctly."

"Then I will make a bargain with you," went on the other in a smooth tone. "In exchange for information from us, we ask the same from you. Are you willing to make an exchange?"

"Perhaps," Ned answered. "Maybe our information wouldn't help."

"We shall see. Now, first, you are at Bochnia, a little way to the east of Cracow. Vienna lies almost due southwest, and the city of Berlin is almost due northwest. You are nearly one hundred and fifty miles almost due west of Peremysl," he concluded.

"That's good!" declared Ned. "We thank you heartily."

"Food is scarce," went on the other. "Gasoline is also scarce, and so is information. You may have all you want of either if you will be fair enough to reciprocate my kindness."

"What can we do for you in exchange for all this kindness?"

"Tell me how many German troops are leaving Peremysl," said the man.

For a moment Ned was about to speak. Then he stopped.

"We can't tell you that!" he said in a low tone. "We're not spies!"

CHAPTER XIII

A GREAT SURPRISE

From the tone in which the remark was made Jimmie understood that the speaker was referring contemptuously to either himself or Dave.

He thought that he recognized the voice, but could not at once determine the identity of the one who made the statement. Just at the moment there appeared to be a world of canvas and ropes wound about his head and body. He gasped for breath.

Struggling to free himself from the entangling mass of cloth that seemed to be smothering and weighing him down, the lad presently found an opening, through which he thrust his head. Blinking rapidly as he cleared his eyes from the dust that had arisen because of the sudden downfall of the tent, the lad gazed about in astonishment.

"Here, here; cut it out!" he cried as he felt a rough hand laid upon his ankle. "What do you think you are doing, anyway?"

"Aus!" a rough voice sounded in his ear.

For a moment Jimmie lay without making an effort to rise. He was trying to regain his sense of location that had been momentarily disturbed because of his fall and sudden change of scene.

The next instant the hand shifted from his ankle to his collar, and he was unceremoniously dragged forth from the enveloping folds of the tent cloth. Without an apology the one who had so effectively taken the boy from his position set him upon his feet.

"Hands off!" the lad cried with hot resentment at the treatment. "Leave go of me or I'll start working on you! Who are you, anyway?"

"That will do, young man," spoke a well-known voice, and Jimmie recognized von Liebknecht. "Why do you enter my tent so rudely?"

"Is this your tent?" asked Jimmie, wrinkling his freckled nose and blinking at the officer as he sparred for time.

"It was!" came the reply in icy tones, for von Liebknecht was plainly angered. "Why do you enter unannounced?"

"Well, if you'd ever been on Wall street," Jimmie began, with a twinkle in his eye, "you'd understand me perfectly when I say that I took a little flier in aeroplanes. The stock went up rapidly, and I felt the bottom

drop out of the market. When I landed, my surprise was, to say the least, quite 'in tents'!"

"You speak strangely," von Liebknecht replied. "What do you mean?"

"Sorry if I say things you can't understand," went on the boy, "but you will have to let me tell the story in my own way. Not to change the subject at all, but I'd like to ask after my partner."

"Your partner?" was von Liebknecht's surprised question.

"Yes, the lad who came with me. Did you see anything of him?"

"Oh, you mean the Boy Scout. He is somewhere about. He was not quite so fortunate as you. He is being cared for."

"Where?" was Jimmie's startled query. "Let me see him."

"All in good time. He is over there," replied von Liebknecht, pointing to a little group of officers and men not far away.

"Excuse me; I'll be back in a minute," stated Jimmie, darting in the direction indicated. "This is rotten luck!" he added as he approached the group. "I hope that kid isn't hurt badly."

Much to Jimmie's relief he saw the other boy rise to his feet as he approached. In another instant he was by the other's side.

"Are you hurt badly?" he inquired solicitously.

"Not hurt a bit!" declared Dave, drawing himself to his full height and stretching one arm after the other to prove his statement.

"But you're pretty thoroughly shaken up, though!" declared the red-headed lad. "You must have fallen harder than I did."

"Well, I'll admit that last statement," laughed Dave. "I guess the breath was jolly well knocked out of me, don't you know."

"Not quite Johnnie Bull enough to be English," mused Jimmie aloud, "but still too much Johnnie Bull to be strictly United States. Say, Scout, where are you from, and what is your name, and where are you going?" he went on, gazing earnestly at the stranger.

Dave laughed at Jimmie's broadside of questions and answered by introducing himself. He received in turn a statement of Jimmie's name and rank, together with the name of his patrol.

"What were you trying to do?" asked Jimmie as he noted that Dave was able to stand alone and even to walk a few steps.

"Why, we were trying to give you a chance to get out of this mess," replied Dave. "If it hadn't been for the rotten luck that German

marksman had in cutting the line by which we hung, we'd have made it, too!"

"And then the German army would surely have been defeated," put in Jimmie with a broad smile, "for without this valuable addition to his fighting forces the Kaiser would never be able to conduct this war at all properly. They need me here in the army, it seems."

"It begins to look to me as if they'll be needing me, too," added Dave. "I'll wager a pretty penny they won't let either of us go now!"

"We'll see about that," confidently replied The Wolf. "We may have a word or two to say in our own behalf. We'll try, anyway."

"What shall we do now?" asked Dave as he brushed a bit of dust from his uniform. "We can't very well take French leave just now."

"We'd better report to von Liebknecht, who is in command here. He'll be apt to make us carry garbage away from the kitchen, but we'll have to submit to that until the opportunity for escape appears. Here he comes now. Just keep a stiff upper lip and leave the talking to me."

But von Liebknecht spared both Jimmie and Dave the necessity of making explanations. His men had already reported fully the at-

tempted rescue of their red-headed recruit by those in the aeroplane.

A sharp order was given, and instantly the boys were being escorted toward the stables. There they were assigned to tasks under the watchful eyes of certain soldiers, amongst whom Jimmie noted his erstwhile friend Otto. In the hurry and excitement of breaking camp conversation between the newly made chums was impossible.

From that moment the boys noted preparations for the departure of the regiment. Far into the night they worked side by side with the soldiers of the Imperial Kaiser, loading horses and various items of baggage and supplies into a train waiting not far distant from the camp.

By the time that the last horse had been properly placed in the cars and the last item of baggage was correctly stowed, the lads were so weary and exhausted they were glad to lay themselves on a pile of forage. In another moment they were both fast asleep.

Jimmie was wakened by the stopping of the train. He reached out a hand and touched Dave on the arm. As Dave turned and was about to rise, Jimmie slid his hands over the other's lips.

"Hush-sh-sh!" he whispered in a scarcely audible tone. "I don't know where we are.

Maybe we'll have a chance to make a getaway."

"Let's try to find out where we are," replied Dave, instantly wide awake and using the same cautious tone employed by The Wolf.

Carefully the boys rose from their position and proceeded to a position where they could look from the car.

"No use!" declared Jimmie as he peered forth. "They've got the track lighted up all along the train, and there are about 'steen billion or so of soldiers patrolling the blooming train!"

"I can count up to seventeen million myself," added Dave in the same spirit. "After that I lose count on a fat one. I don't know whether to count him as two or whether I'm seeing double."

"I guess you're not seeing double at all, at all," replied Jimmie. "I think I see the same guy myself. He's certainly some big gun!"

"Which one do you mean?" queried Dave, trying to locate the one Jimmie referred to. "I can't quite make him out right now."

"That fellow over there," answered the other, pointing toward the forward end of the train. "Can't you see the big automobile that just pulled up? I saw that big guy get out of it just now."

"Sure enough!" declared Dave. "I can see

the auto now, and I think I can see the man, too. Wonder who he is and what he wants."

"Probably he's only a station master or something," said Jimmie with feigned unconcern. "Maybe it's the Kaiser himself for all we know. If it is he, I'm going to scold him roundly for deserting all the perfectly good sausages in Berlin and coming way out here just to stop our perfectly good little train. Wonder what he wants."

"There they come now," went on Dave excitedly. "They're all coming along this way, and it looks as if he's going back to the caboose. Maybe he's going to ride with us a little way."

"Can you see what they're trying to do now?" asked Jimmie.

"In just a minute I will," was the answer. "Let me get a good hold here and I'll lean out a ways from the car."

Dave grasped the side of the door and leaned far out from the carriage in which the boys were riding. Had he not done so the result might have been far different. Jimmie had only time to utter a single word of caution before he saw that his chum was slipping.

With a cry Dave tried to regain his lost balance. Finding that it was impossible to draw himself back into the car, the lad chose the only

other possible course and leaped into the air in an effort to land squarely on his feet as he left the car.

In this he was successful. He came down beside the track upon his feet, turning just in time to face the approaching group.

Jimmie gazed in wonderment and amazement upon the features of the man he had previously noted. For a moment he stared speechless.

"Well, I'll be sold for a cent!" he declared as he observed the individual closely. "If it isn't the Kaiser I'll eat my hat!"

It was indeed none other than the Kaiser himself! Jimmie had recognized the man because he had seen so many pictures of the notable person who was directing the fighting forces of a great nation.

Instantly the lad recognized the fact that he was committing an act of extreme incivility in thus shouting out the identity of so august and important a personage. Yet he also knew that it was too late to retract his statement. He therefore, with his usual air of unconcern, determined to face the matter and make the best of it.

Wtihout waiting for further preliminaries the lad dropped to the ground and placed himself beside his comrade.

Drawing himself to his full height, the lad faced the Kaiser and saluted, using the well-known form adopted by the Boy Scouts.

Much to his astonishment, his salute was gravely returned by the other, and the party came to a halt.

"What can I do for you?" inquired the Kaiser in a not unkindly tone, dropping his hand again to his side.

"Well," began Jimmie, scarcely knowing just how he should address the man, "in the first place, we are not spies, and then, besides, we'd like to get back to the United States without any trouble."

"So?" inquired the other. "And why do you wish to go to the United States, may I ask? Is your business urgent there?"

"Not at all," replied Jimmie. "Nothing urgent about it except that we understand you are having a war over here and we don't want to get mixed up in it. That's all, and it's enough, too!"

"And you declare that you are not spies. Who has said you were?"

"Well, it seems to be the pretty general opinion that because I was found in Peremysl with a Cossack uniform on that I am a Russian," went on Jimmie. "Mr. von Liebknecht, here, seems to think that I am trying to get back to

the Russian army with a lot of information that I haven't got and—oh, a whole lot of things!"

So great was the lad's excitement at an opportunity to unburden his grievances that he spoke rapidly. As he paused for breath the other looked about the group of officers. Then he said:

"This is indeed a strange circumstance. Just now the regiment is moving westward, and it is not proper that they should be delayed. Orders have been given for their departure, and they must be obeyed. If you will come with me we will inquire into the merits of your case and decide what shall be done. Will you do that?"

"Yes, sir, we'll be glad to," replied Jimmie, turning to Dave for confirmation. "We'll go with you."

CHAPTER XIV

BAFFLED PURSUERS

"There, there," said the man soothingly, "of course you're not spies. I didn't intend to have you understand that you would be acting the part of spies in giving me the trifle of information I wanted. You failed to understand me, that's all."

"Well, then," replied Ned, "I apologize. I thought you were asking me about the German troops and their movements."

"So I was," went on the man. "I wanted to know so that the good people of this stricken village could be prepared."

"How could the people of this village resist the Germans?" asked Ned wonderingly. "I don't see any fighting men about."

"That's just the point," pursued the other. "All the men and boys capable of carrying weapons or doing anything like a man's job at any kind of work have been drafted by the Germans."

"Then what's the excitement about?" put in Jack impatiently. "We can't see why you or

the village people should worry if the Germans have taken everything that can be taken."

"You don't understand, I see," continued the other. "The Germans have left here only women and children and very old men. They even took away with them such food supplies as could be transported easily. Now there is very little grain left, and with it perhaps a few potatoes and other things. But all the cattle and other food supply has been removed. The villagers are on the point of starving."

"Won't the soldiers feed them when they come—that is, if they're actually coming?" inquired Jack, presenting his own solution of the case.

"We are afraid they will not," was the answer. "They have not a very savory reputation here. It is the intention of the remaining people to escape to the country, taking with them whatever they can carry, when they know the Germans are again moving in this direction."

"Why, then, don't they go now and be done with it?" asked Ned.

"Evidently you do not understand the characteristics of this people or their love of their home, no matter how humble it may be," was the answer. "If you only understood the fact that these good people have a gentler side to

their nature and that their love of home and family is fully as great as you will find in your own country, you would not need to ask such a question. It is a most serious matter to most if not all of these people to go away from their homes."

"But I don't see that any information we can give you would be of the slightest assistance at this time," objected Ned.

"It would give us time to prepare for the intended flight."

"I can't see it," argued Ned. "You seem to know that the Germans are moving westward from Peremysl. That is more than we know."

"We know that they have been successful in their assault on the town, and we understand that the capture of that stronghold will leave many troops free for use at other points. What can be more natural than that they should leave Peremysl in the hands of a force sufficient to guard it against any possible attack by the Russians and rush the remainder of their troops to other points where they are needed—say a few regiments at strategic points like Verdun?"

As he finished speaking the man glanced casually about the place, as if observing a passer-by. Ned and his companions exchanged quick looks of inquiry. Using the mute language in

which the boys were adept, Ned flashed a question at his chums.

"What do you suppose he wants?" he asked. Then in the same manner he went on: "Be careful. I mistrust this fellow! He is not square!"

Jack and Harry had only time to nod their understanding of the message before the man again turned to them and went on:

"So you see, don't you, that you would be rendering a real aid to a stricken and starving people by giving us whatever information you may have about the movements of the German troops?"

"No, I can't say that I do," replied Ned positively. "You seem to have plenty of information on hand right now to enable you to make any necessary preparations for the advent of the Germans if such a thing should happen. For myself, I don't believe that the Germans would visit this place a second time. It isn't at all likely."

"And why not, pray?" was the man's query.

"For the same reason that lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place and a mule doesn't kick twice in the same place—they don't have to," was Ned's quiet answer. "That's a good reason, isn't it?"

Although Ned's answer had been made in a

quiet tone, the words were full of meaning, and it was apparent to all that the man was capable of understanding the firmness and resolve in Ned's manner and voice.

"So, then, you refuse to give me any information concerning the movement of the troops?" went on the other with an air of finality. "Of course, I suppose you realize that the result of a German raid on this town would be laid at your door if an inquiry were made? The good people here are not so ready to forgive as you may imagine. If you have information that would help them to safety and do not give it, could you blame them if they felt rather unfriendly toward you?"

"Now see here, Mister—whatever your name is—," began Ned, slightly nettled, "we came here only to find a place to buy some gasoline and some food. We are not in this country as spies, and we have repeatedly declined to give information to either side. We can't start now."

"All right, then," said the man, nodding his head slightly, "have your own way about it. But," he went on, "if you fail to make any purchases such as you desire, please don't blame anyone but yourselves."

With these words he turned on his heel and left the three lads staring after him in amaze-

ment. He proceeded quickly, and was soon out of sight behind a house slightly larger than the others.

"Well, he told us where we were, at any rate," said Ned with a huge sigh as the man disappeared from their view. "He's generous!"

"Nix on the sarcasm," counseled Harry; "it strikes me that we are in a pretty tight fix right now. That fellow won't do a thing but make it interesting for us if he gets half a chance."

"You're right, Harry," put in Jack with vigor. "Do you know, boys, I wouldn't object to making a little bet that our visitor is a German himself, put here for the purpose of keeping an eye on everything that goes on. He was just trying to pump us, that's all."

"Do you really think so?" asked Ned. "He seemed all right at first."

"I thought so, too," went on Jack, "but did you notice how rather uppish he got when we wouldn't tell him all we know and then some?"

"He was inclined to get rather dictatorial toward the last," admitted Ned. "Come to think about it, he didn't look like an ordinary villager at that. Wonder who he could have been."

"I'm not wondering so much at who he could have been as what he's liable to do," was Jack's

answer. "I began to suspect him just the minute you warned us. I'm glad we didn't tell him anything."

"Let's get out of here, boys," suggested Harry. "If that fellow is within fourteen rows of apple trees of the truth and this village is deserted by all the able-bodied men, we won't have much chance of getting gasoline or food or information at this place."

"What shall we do?" asked Ned. "What is your idea?"

"I move we go back to the Eagle and 'get out of town'."

"Second the motion," cried Jack eagerly. "I don't like this place a little bit! Let's be going now."

"All right, then; right about face, march!" commanded Ned.

All three boys wheeled and started back in the direction they had come. They traveled at a good pace for the first few moments.

Jack even essayed to whistle "Tipperary" between his teeth to help them along. With visions of a speedy departure from that neighborhood in their minds, the boys swung along at a good pace.

Suddenly they were startled to hear the report of a rifle and to be greeted by the peculiar tearing sound made by a bullet in its flight

through the air. Almost as if actuated by a common impulse the three lads crouched low and broke into a run.

Again came the report of the rifle and the noise of a bullet speeding on its errand of death. As Jack had stooped to run he had taken a quick glance over his shoulder. Now he closed in nearer to Ned.

"That fellow is in the house on our right," he panted. "I saw the flash of the gun as he fired that time."

Ned's only reply was a quick nod. He did not waste breath in making a reply where none was needed. For answer he merely extended his hand to administer a touch of encouragement on Jack's shoulder.

By this time darkness had settled almost completely over the place, and the boys found running in the not over-excellent highway a task that required every ounce of their strength and agility.

Presently Ned slackened speed. His companions did likewise.

"Whew!" the boy panted. "That was rather exciting, wasn't it?"

"Sure was," came Harry's labored answer. "But we ought to be somewhere near the Eagle by this time," he added.

"I think I recognize those trees there now,"

Ned put in as the three advanced at a walk. "Let's get into the field and be on our way just as quickly as we can. I don't like to be shot at."

"Do you think we have gasoline enough for an extended flight?" asked Harry anxiously. "We'd feel nice to get caught with a flat tire or something a mile up in the air."

"We have plenty, I think," was Ned's answer. "We can gauge the tank easily enough if we can't see the indicator."

"Ha, there she is now!" exclaimed Jack as the three boys broke through the growth of underbrush and entered the field where the Eagle had been left. "She's closer in than I thought," he went on.

"Well, distances are mighty deceptive in the darkness," explained Ned. "It is very easy to be mistaken on a little matter like that."

"All right, Boss," was Jack's answer in a relieved tone, now that he was again near their beloved plane. "Let's have your searchlight."

"Here it is," said Ned, producing the desired article. "Lucky for us that I brought it along. Better start the engine with the muffler on. We don't want the remaining villagers to come storming up here."

Ned handed the searchilght to Jack and then prepared to make ready for the anticipated flight by buttoning his coat tightly at the

throat. He knew that the damp chilliness of night would be uncomfortable. Just as Ned and Harry were preparing to assist their chum they were startled to hear him cry out in surprise:

"This isn't the Eagle, boys! This is a strange machine!"

"What?" gasped the two boys on the ground. "A strange machine?"

"Certainly. Look here! Why," Jack continued, "I actually believe it's a German aeroplane! Now, what do you think of that!"

"Then in that case there are Germans near," decided Ned instantly.

"Say, boys, I have an idea!" was Harry's excited statement.

"All right, let's have it," requested Jack. "Such rare occurrences should deserve special mention. We'll mention you in the log of the trip. Perhaps you'll have a medal struck off just for that."

Although the lads were in a situation that was anything but pleasant, Jack could not resist the temptation to have a little fun.

"Let's take the German gasoline and put it into our tanks," went on Harry, without giving attention to the attempted joke.

"Good idea!" declared Ned in lower tones. "But where's the Eagle?"

"I think I can see it right over there," said Harry, pointing.

It was even as the lad said. Their own machine lay not far from the one they were examining. Working quickly, the lads produced a bucket from the Eagle and in a short time had located the drain cock at the bottom of the German plane's fuel tank.

They had successfully transferred several loads of the precious fluid to the tank of the Eagle, working with extreme caution, when Jack gave a warning hiss from his post at the hedge screening the field.

"They're coming!" he cried in a whisper as he hurried up.

CHAPTER XV

A BIT OF SCIENCE

As Jimmie announced the willingness of the two lads to accompany the German forces he was looking straight at Dave. The lad from the Northwest thought he caught the slightest tremor of Jimmie's eyelid, but was not positive. However, acting on the assumption that he was correct and that Jimmie had some purpose in declaring in so positive a manner his intentions, Dave thought best to offer no remonstrance.

With senses keenly alert the two boys watched closely the actions of the group of officers and soldiers about them.

Their stay in this place would be short, for it would not take long to change engines and have the troops moving westward again. A second section of the train was following closely. The boys knew that no time would be lost by those in charge of the movement of troop trains.

Therefore they were especially anxious to discover some means of escape, if possible. None, it seemed, presented itself.

Hedged round by a ring of soldiers who were fully armed, the boys could see others at a short distance patrolling the station grounds. An open space of some considerable area was occupied just now by small groups of soldiers who had left the train by permission and were walking about for exercise. Electric lights were mounted on poles to give illumination to the grounds.

The Kaiser and his party again resumed their interrupted progress toward the rear of the train, leaving an officer with the boys.

"What are they waiting for, Jimmie?" asked Dave, peering about.

"Search me," replied the red-headed lad. "They've got the engine coupled on, I guess, and I'm ready to go."

"Do you mean to go all the way to Verdun?" asked Dave anxiously.

"Not on your photograph done in oils," responded Jimmie with more vigor than elegance. "We shake this bunch as soon as a chance comes!"

"Right-o!" was Dave's rejoinder. "That's what I say, you know."

"I don't know where the other boys have gone by this time, but it's a cinch that they won't stray far from the line of railroad if their gasoline holds out. If we can drop off be-

tween stops we can signal them and maybe they'll find us. It ought to be easy."

"You jolly well keep up your spirit," said Dave admiringly. "I rather think, don't you know, that I'm fortunate in finding you boys. It'll be something to remember when I get back home."

"Thanks," returned Jimmie. "It's a good thing we can say the same. It isn't often we meet up with fellows as full of grit as you."

"I haven't done anything at all yet," replied Dave modestly. "In fact, I only made a bally mess of what I attempted. But you wait—"

"Listen!" commanded Jimmie, interrupting what Dave was about to say.

"I'm listening, don't you know," replied Dave.

"What do you hear?" asked The Wolf, with his head on one side.

"Why, bless my heart, it sounds quite like the exhaust of a motor. Now I wonder what it can be. It's a petrol motor, too!"

"I know what it is!" Jimmie almost cried out loud. "It's an airship!"

"Can it be the boys coming back after us?" questioned Dave doubtingly.

"That doesn't sound like the exhaust from the Eagle," protested Jimmie with a shake of his head. "She's got a dandy muffler."

Others of the party beside the train were now observing the noise that the lads had noticed. An officer dashed across the open space on which the soldiers were exercising. Running up to the group in which the Kaiser walked, he saluted gravely and reported the circumstance.

Nearer and nearer came the sound. At length it appeared directly overhead. Looking up, the boys could faintly make out a great gray form at some distance above the train. For an instant only it appeared, to vanish the next instant in the darkness. The clamor of the motors, however, was not diminished.

"He's going to land near here," whispered Jimmie, grasping Dave's arm in his excitement. "We'll soon see who and what he is."

The boy's prediction was correct. For a short time the aviator circled about the station, evidently searching for a suitable place in which to make a landing. In another moment it was seen clearly that he intended to land as near the station as possible.

Of all the observers none was more interested than the two Boy Scouts so strangely thrown into the company of this train load of fighting men and their emperor. Jimmie was the first to discover the pilot's intentions. Grasping Dave's arm, he dragged the other a

short distance away from the spot, to be clear of the descending plane.

A switch engine was bringing up a coach to attach it to the rear of the train. The coach was evidently intended for the use of the Kaiser, for it was stopped exactly opposite the little party surrounding him.

At a signal from the man whom the whole German army worshipped the engine moved the coach a short distance down the track while the emperor and his staff gave their attention to the daring aviator.

"Geewhillikins!" exclaimed Jimmie breathlessly. "Those fellows better look out a little or they'll get run over!"

It truly appeared as if this contingency were about to occur, for the soldiers made no attempt to clear the tiny parade ground. Instead they waited for the approach of the speeding plane.

In another moment the machine was upon the ground and running along upon its wheels. Many willing hands grasped portions of the framework and assisted in bringing the machine to a halt.

Before the task of stopping the aeroplane was fairly accomplished the pilot had leaped from his seat. He approached the group of

officers about the Kaiser with rather unsteady steps and gravely saluted.

The salute was returned by the entire party, who then stood at attention. From the center of the party the Kaiser stepped forward.

A few short, brisk sentences were exchanged between the Kaiser and the stranger who had descended so precipitately from the sky.

"Gee!" exclaimed Jimmie in disgust. "They're talking German, and I can't understand it at all! What rotten luck!"

"Hush!" responded Dave. "I'm getting a word now and again. Perhaps I can make out what it is the chap is reporting."

"If you can understand that awful bunch of noises they call a language you're going some!" declared Jimmie, half to himself.

"Just a moment now," said Dave. "He's unburdening himself of a long talk about the movement of some troops, I take it. Now he is saying," the boy went on, "that he has seen or some one has seen a strange aeroplane near here. It is supposed to be one of the French machines that has somehow got past the lines and is scouting."

"Let him report that stuff all he wants to," was Jimmie's comment in an uninterested manner. "We should worry a lot about that!"

"But suppose it is the Eagle he has sighted?"

"Ah!" was the lad's quick ejaculation. "It can't be the Eagle."

"Why not?" asked Dave. "Isn't it entirely possible?"

"Well, come to think of it, you are right. It might be the Eagle he has seen and is reporting. What can we do to stop him if he should take a soldier or two with him now and start out to plug the little old Eagle and her crew full of bullet holes?"

"I can't imagine, you know," was Dave's puzzled reply, "unless we prevent his getting away at all. I don't see how that is to be done."

A sudden resolve came to the red-headed lad as he pondered over the situation. Glancing quickly about to observe whether the two were under surveillance, he drew from his pocket several small objects.

"Stay just about here, Dave," he said. "I'm going over to the machine and see what I can do to fix it so they can't run very well. If I'm successful it may mean that we can save the boys on the Eagle. If I'm caught at it I'll take part in a little shooting-fest myself, and I'll act the part of the shootee. Keep your eyes peeled, and if anyone comes this way put me wise by whistling."

"Don't try anything rash, now," was Dave's remark at this statement. "If they catch you doing tricks to their machine it'll go hard."

"I'm going to take a long chance," Jimmie answered, with the peculiar setting of his jaws that his comrades had learned so well to understand meant a resolve that nothing could swerve. "Keep your eyes open."

"But, I say," was Dave's further objection, "it won't do any good to drain his gasoline. There's likely a supply right here and he can reload in a few minutes. Use all your caution, Jimmie!"

"All right, I'll use all my caution and something else," was the answer as the lad moved slowly toward the aeroplane, as if to casually examine the rigging out of a boy's natural curiosity.

For some moments Dave stood fairly torn by his emotions. He was fearful that Jimmie would be discovered meddling with the mechanism and that the consequences of such discovery would be dire.

Glancing alertly from side to side, the lad stood at his post in a fever of excitement. He strove to keep his hands from trembling. His knees seemed scarcely able to support the weight of his body.

Presently the group of officers about the

Kaiser seemed to have questioned the aviator to their complete satisfaction, for several turned and walked down the track toward the coach waiting for the use of the Kaiser. Others walked briskly away across the parade ground, while the aviator himself and the Kaiser walked together along the track toward the aeroplane that had brought the man to earth.

Dave was about to signal Jimmie that danger was near, when he saw that the lad was coming back. So interested were the aviator and his auditor in the conversation that was going on that they apparently did not notice the boy leaving the vicinity of the machine.

Jimmie joined Dave with an air of extreme boredness.

"What did you do, Jimmie?" asked Dave breathlessly.

"I fixed his clock, all right!" was the answer. Jimmie pointed to one of the electric lights swinging from a pole not far away.

"See that electric light?" he asked. "Well, that's the greatest invention of man. Without it the whole world would lose lots of time."

"What has that to do with the aeroplane?" asked Dave wonderingly.

"Nothing. I just wanted to get your mind off the subject. You're trembling like a leaf,"

answered Jimmie. "If they see you it'll be a dead give-away. Can't you stop shaking so? What's the matter?"

"I'm going to stop. I was just thinking about what would happen to you if they saw you at the machine. I'm all right now."

"You'd better be. If they start any questions, just remember that you never saw an aeroplane nor a Boy Scout in your life."

"There he is now," said Dave, pointing toward the machine.

"He's going to try to make a start," said Jimmie. "But for goodness' sake," the boy went on, "get your mind off it. Look away."

By this time the aviator had reached the machine and was preparing for another flight. Willing hands had been stretched forth from the crowd of soldiers who had but a moment before ignored the machine entirely, and the plane was turned about and headed away from the station.

A preliminary explosion or two from the motors announced to all that the aviator intended leaving the place. Other explosions rapidly succeeded the first. Then came a silence. The aviator was examining his machine, evidently seeking for the cause of some trouble.

The exhausts of his motor had been regular,

but something had gone wrong, and he was trying to locate the difficulty.

Presently he again started the engine in an effort to warm it up. Becoming impatient at his failure to readily locate the cause of the uneven running of his motor, the aviator turned on full power.

For an instant the clatter of the motor drowned all other sounds. Throughout the roar of the exhaust the sharp ears of the two boys could discover a strange vibration that told of trouble.

Before they could again turn to examine the aeroplane that had been wheeled along the ground for some distance, there came a crash, followed by a rending, tearing sound. Then all was still again.

As Jimmie and Dave turned they saw the aeroplane lying a wreck, torn by its own propellers.

CHAPTER XVI

UNDER FALSE COLORS

"Well, let 'em come," declared Harry, hastening toward the Eagle with the last load of gasoline. "We are ready for a quick start now, and if they want to see a correct imitation of three boys beating it down the road they'd better hurry. We can't wait much longer."

"Sure!" put in Ned. "Shall we whistle a warning signal to hurry them up a little, or shall we let them miss the boat?"

"Let 'em miss the boat if they can't get here on time," laughed Jack, carrying out the joke, although the case of the lads was apt to become anything but a joke if their presence was discovered by the German soldiers who were approaching at some distance down the road.

"Hurry, boys," cautioned Ned, laying aside his jovial air as he began preparations for departure. "We mustn't get caught now."

"All right, Boss, we're with you every minute," declared Jack.

The boy was already in the fuselage of the Eagle. He reached an eager hand to assist

Harry with the gasoline. Harry cilmbed up to a favorable position and was about to pour the gasoline into the fuel tank while Ned, in his haste to be off, was priming the motors.

Suddenly all three were startled to hear a voice from the rear of the machine they were occupying.

"Halt!" they heard. "Come out of that machine or I fire!"

"Who's that?" asked Jack, pausing in the operation of emptying the fuel. "What do you want and how did you come there?"

"Give her the gas, Ned!" urged Harry. "We're all ready to go and he's on the ground. He can't catch us in a million years."

"I can't make the engine go at all," almost sobbed Ned in his excitement. "Somebody has been monkeying with the machinery."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the newcomer. "So the engine won't run, eh?"

"No, it won't!" snapped Ned as he turned a wrathful face toward the rear of the Eagle to observe the stranger. "Did you do it?"

"Yah!" came the answer. "Mine comrade and myself, ve done tings mit der wires. Dere is no current by der spark plugs alretty!"

"Good night!" was Ned's ejaculation of despair as he realized that the words of the stranger were but too true. "No current!"

"Yah!" laughed the stranger. "But," he added, "we haf current in our guns. Maybe you like dot ve show you. Und ve vill, too, aber you don'd come out of dot machine, und do id quick!"

"I guess it's all up, boys," said Ned forlornly. "We might as well unload. They have got the upper hand of us this time."

"I move we cut and run for it," proposed Jack with spirit. "We could easily beat them in the darkness and amongst the trees."

"I don't think so," cautioned Harry. "They have got help coming up the road, and we don't know how many of them are near here."

"No, boys," counseled Ned, "we'd better try some other stunt. If they get angry at us they might do anything, and we can't stand it to get shot to pieces just now. Remember, Jimmie and Dave need us."

"All right, then, Old Fox," was Jack's reply in a resigned tone, "we'll just trot along as meek as lambs and leave the Eagle to their tender mercies. I tell you, though, I hate to do it."

"Hark! I hear the others coming through the hedge!" said Harry.

"There's quite a bunch of them, to judge by the sound."

"Well, the more the merrier," declared Ned. "In numbers there is strength, I've heard, and

perhaps in numbers will come our chance. If they'll only get in one another's way for a while we'll give them an opportunity to hear what a real old-fashioned 'good-by' is like."

"Come oudt, now," commanded the stranger, banging at the framework of the Eagle with a very serviceable looking rifle.

"Coming!" announced Jack as he prepared to descend. Ned and Harry at once followed their comrade, and directly found themselves on the ground, confronted by several men in the uniform of one of the German regiments. The officer in command looked his surprise.

Only a few words were needed from their captor to acquaint the officer with the situation. He laughed immoderately at the apparent joke of the purloiners of his gasoline being caught before they had time to use it. His merriment was infectious, and presently the entire group were giving vent to their feelings.

The three boys felt that they were the object of the soldiers' ridicule, yet they were unable to make any reply, since they did not understand sufficient German to be able to converse with their captors.

When the officer had finally laughed himself tired he gave a command and the soldiers formed about the lads and began escorting them toward the town. Once there, the officer

led the way to a house with which he was evidently familiar.

Lights were brought and an examination of the lads was begun. After several preliminary questions the officer found that he had met his match in the matter of wits. Ned declined absolutely to give any information other than that he and his comrades were from the United States and heartily wished to be back there.

"So-o-o," was the astonished comment of the officer. "Und you are neutral and vish to be neutral all the while?"

"Yes, sir," was Ned's reply as he looked the other squarely in the eye. "We are not spies and cannot give you any information."

"But you would go oudt and start somethings maybe if I let you go."

"No, sir, we wouldn't," declared Ned. "We came to this village and wanted to buy some gasoline and food, but a man we met wouldn't sell any. Instead of that we were shot at as we were leaving."

"Oh, vell," said the officer, waving his hand in a deprecating manner, "who cares about a little ting like dot in var time?"

"Well, if we had got hit by one of the bullets we wouldn't have felt very joyful about it, I can tell you that!" said Ned.

"Und why was it that this man wouldn't sell you the gasoline?"

"I don't know unless it was because we wouldn't answer his questions about the movement of German troops," answered Ned.

"I don't think that was it at all," laughed the officer. "It was those uniforms of yours. You see, they are different than what he was accustomed to seeing, and he probably thought they were Russian."

"Possibly that was it," agreed Ned, although he secretly doubted this flimsy explanation. "Of course, I don't know."

"Yes," the other went on, "I'm sure that was it, and I suggest that the best plan would be to change them. You will therefore remove your uniforms and we will provide you with others more suitable."

"Well, if you please," Ned remonstrated, "we'd much rather take our chances wearing these same uniforms. They're ours and others are not. It wouldn't be very nice to go back on your uniform."

"But you will change, nevertheless," announced the other. "We need those uniforms and you don't. So be quick about it."

At a signal one of the men now came forward bearing an armful of clothes, which he threw down upon the floor in front of the lads.

"Good night!" said Jack as he put on a coarse shirt several sizes too large. "This is no joke at all. Those fellows were laughing a few minutes ago, but they'll laugh worse than ever when they see us."

In fact, the boys had to laugh at each other, so strange was the appearance of the three when they were finally dressed.

"Now," said the officer with a smile, when the exchange of clothing had been arranged, "we shall let you occupy this little room for a time."

He indicated a small room leading from the larger one. It was the room from which the soldier had provided the clothing the boys now wore.

In another moment the lads found themselves alone with the door leading into the outer room securely fastened.

"Just a little bit dark in here, isn't it?" inquired Harry as the door closed and the sound of the falling latch came to their ears.

"Yes, but I managed to smuggle my pocket contents into these clothes," said Ned. "I have the searchlight yet."

"Let's use it, then, and be quick about it," suggested Harry. "I don't somehow like the looks of this place. I'd like to be on the little old Eagle again and homeward bound."

"I guess that's the pretty general sentiment," said Ned as he brought forth the searchlight and proceeded to send its flame into the corners of the room. "We can't get anywhere by remaining here."

"Hello!" exclaimed Harry, lighting upon some boxes in one corner. "What's this stuff here? Looks like a gents' furnishing store."

"Why, it's German uniforms, and lots of 'em!" declared Jack.

"Sure enough, it is!" agreed Harry, pulling several garments from one of the boxes. "Now that looks more like business than these ragged old clothes. I wonder if we could get a fit in here."

"Go as far as you like!" urged Jack. "Throw a fit any old place and see if we care. The house is yours, so help yourself."

"Aw, you go on!" scorned Harry, administering a playful blow on Jack's ear. "If you weren't so small I'd give you a licking."

"Yes, you would!" derisively answered the other. "You have never seen the day you could do that. That," he added, "is a man's job!"

"Boys, boys!" cautioned Ned. "A joke is a joke, but don't carry it too far. We must save our strength for more vital things."

Harry and Jack had been busily engaged in

pulling the uniforms out of the box, and now stood erect, each holding in his hands garments that seemed to be of suitable size for the boys to wear.

"What's the trouble now, Jack?" asked Ned.

"Why, I can't see whether these clothes are the right size or not,"

"You don't need to see," retorted Ned. "Try them on and they'll be like the baby in the story."

"Oh, I know that!" cried Harry eagerly. "The nurse didn't need a thermometer, because if the water was too hot the baby turned red and if it was too cold he turned blue. Is that the answer?"

"Right you are!" declared Ned, laughing. "So we'll try the clothes on, and if they're right they'll fit, and if they're not right, why—"

"Why," interrupted Jack, "if they're not right we should worry."

"Yes, I guess that's about it," answered Ned as he picked up an outfit that he assumed to be the right size.

The boys found little difficulty in getting clothing of suitable sizes, and soon stood forth arrayed in German uniforms.

"Now, then, let's see what the chances of escape may be," said Ned.

A trial of the one small window showed that it was not locked. There appeared to be no one outside guarding the exit, and, since the noises in the outer room had ceased, the lads determined to leave by the window. In a short time they again stood outside the house.

To make their way back to the field where the Eagle had been left was a short task and quickly accomplished. There they found, to their astonishment, that the two aeroplanes remained in the same position and were apparently unguarded.

This time, however, the lads were more cautious in their approach, and reconnoitered the vicinity thoroughly before approaching the plane.

Ned set to work immediately and soon announced that he had again connected the severed wires. In another moment the Eagle rose above the field into the darkness of the night.

CHAPTER XVII

ACCUSED

A smile came to Jimmie's lips as he heard the crashing sound that indicated wrecking of the plane. He turned to observe the condition in which he would find the machinery, hoping that it had been damaged beyond repair, or at least so badly damaged that its repair would be a matter of considerable time and effort.

As he wheeled he observed that Dave already had turned to look in that direction, and that his face bore a look of astonishment and surprise. Jimmie's own smile died away as the thought of possible injury to the plucky pilot of the craft came to his mind.

"Oh, Dave!" he cried anxiously, laying his hand upon his comrade's arm. "Can you see the pilot? Has he been hurt badly?"

"I can't see from here, but there's a big crowd gathering about the wreckage, and they seem to be picking something up."

"Gee!" was Jimmie's regretful rejoinder. "I surely hope he got out of the mess without getting hurt. That's all. We haven't got any

particular grudge against him, and I didn't wish to harm him."

"What on earth did you do, anyway, Jimmies?" inquired Dave.

"That was easy enough," replied the other. "I had observed some bolts through the hub of the propeller. I also had several bullets in my pocket, and a good-sized chunk of lead that had been used for filling some holes in a piece of iron back there in the camp at Peremysl. What could be easier than to take out the loose bolt I noticed and fill the hole plumb full of lead? That was all."

"But lead wouldn't wreck a machine so completely as that!"

"Don't you think it wouldn't!" boasted Jimmie, rather proud of the manner in which he had brought about the destruction of the magnificent machine. "Just you ask some one when you get home. Go to a machine shop and ask 'em what an unbalanced condition will do to a high-speed piece of machinery that isn't firmly fastened to a solid base."

"But I can't understand, you know," went on Dave, "just how it was done. I know that you unbalanced the apparatus, but how should that do such damage as this we see here?"

"Well, to be honest with you, I didn't expect that it would. My only thought was to slip out

the big bolt, put in enough lead to fill the hole if I had time, and then let the virbation of the unbalanced machine render it impossible for the aviator to steer or handle the plane. I had not figured on anything giving way as it did."

"Then you don't want all the credit for wrecking the machine?" inquired Dave, with a twinkle in his eye. "Is that it?"

"For some time I don't want any of the credit," replied Jimmie, lowering his voice as an officer approached their position.

"Here comes a fellow," Dave stated, "that would probably be mighty glad to connect us with the incident. But I know nothing!"

"Nor I!" declared Jimmie. "I didn't even see the thing happen!"

"That's true, too, as I can easily testify," added Dave.

Their visitor proved to be none other than von Liebknecht, the officer in charge of the regiment, with whom they were now well acquainted.

"You boys are wanted at the rear," he announced. "Walk directly along the train and report at the coach reserved for the Kaiser."

"Yes, sir," answered Jimmie, giving the Boy Scout salute. "And who shall we find there to whom we shall report?"

"Fritz and Otto, whom you both know, will

be on duty. Tell them that I have sent you back and that you are there for special duty. They are expecting you and will give you instructions."

"Very good, sir," replied Jimmie gravely. Then, as von Liebknecht turned to proceed toward the little station building, he added:

"I see an accident has happened to the aeroplane. I hope the aviator was not badly injured. They're carrying him away."

For a moment von Liebknecht paused to look searchingly into the face of the boy. Jimmie returned his gaze unflinchingly. He said afterward that it was quite the hardest thing he had ever attempted, and several times he was on the point of letting his gaze wander. However, he stood the ordeal well and presently heard the other say:

"He is not badly injured. A few minor contusions and a scratch or so comprise all his hurts. It is very fortunate, however, for all parties concerned," placing peculiar emphasis upon the phrase, "that it is no more serious. It might mean trouble for some one."

"I sure am glad that the fellow is able to get about," was Jimmie's statement. "He's a plucky chap, and from what I saw of him when he landed he is an expert in the matter of han-

dling the aeroplane. It would certainly be a pity if he should be killed or bady injured."

"The German army would lose one of its very best aviators if he were gone," von Liebknecht replied, "and although the loss of his life would be irreparable, it might be decided to take payment in kind."

"Meaning?" asked Jimmie, paling slightly under the freckles as the full import of the other's words came to him.

"Meaning," von Liebknecht replied with wonderful self-control, "that you will report at once as I directed you."

With these words he turned and resumed his interrupted journey toward the station, striding along with considerable haste.

"Gee, Bo!" exclaimed Jimmie as the two lads started for the rear, "that was some close shave! That fellow has got a suspicioner tucked away inside his brain that is working overtime. Every little thing that happens he thinks is caused by a spy or something like that. I wouldn't have his disposition for a million dollars in Mexican money."

In spite of the gravity of their position Dave could not resist the temptation to laugh at Jimmie's exaggerated statement.

The lads could see that the switching engine that had been moving the coach was making

preparations to couple it to the rear of the train, and lost no time in proceeding in its direction.

As stated by von Liebknecht, they found Otto and Fritz acting as guard. The two had received the instructions and were prepared to take charge of the two lads accordingly.

Shortly after Jimmie and Dave reached the coach it was attached to the train and the journey westward was resumed.

Jimmie and Dave had been placed in a compartment at the rear of the coach, together with several of the attaches of the Kaiser's staff. The Kaiser himself occupied a compartment near the forward end, and here he was conducting the necessary details of preparation for the exceedingly strenuous work that lay before the German forces.

For a long time the train jolted on. Engines were changed and train crews replaced by others, and still the regiment proceeded westward. The soldiers disposed themselves about the cars in such positions as were possible and slept the tired sleep of overworked humanity.

Still the Kaiser and his staff sat and discussed plans and prepared orders for the grave matters confronting them in the western amphitheatre of war. Apparently their endur-

ance knew no bounds. Sleep seemed to be farthest from their thoughts.

But at length, wearied from their long vigil and arduous labors, the group were glad to find the Kaiser disposed to snatch a few moments of rest. The maps were folded, the dispatch boxes closed, and all prepared to find positions where they could sleep.

"But the two boys!" von Liebknecht suggested as final preparations were being made for dismissing the group. "What of them?"

"Their case can be settled at once," declared the Kaiser. "Let them be brought here and we shall question them."

And so it was that as the dawn was breaking ruddily in the east Jimmie and Dave were wakened from their sound sleep and informed that their presence was desired in the compartment where the Kaiser waited.

On their feet almost instantly, the two lads rubbed the sleep from their eyes. They stretched and yawned prodigiously.

"Setting-up exercise," commanded Jimmie sharply. "It'll wake us up in fine shape. Here goes—one, two three."

Dave followed Jimmie's example, and the two went through a short routine of bending and turning exercises that started the blood

coursing through their veins and cleared away the fog of sleep.

"There!" announced the red-headed lad presently to the officer. "Now we're ready for the Kaiser or the whole bloomin' German army. Lead on and we'll follow as closely as you like."

Their movements had been closely observed by a group about them, and, in spite of the fact that they were foreigners, many a kindly glance told of the attitude of the men with whom they were placed.

The train had slowed somewhat in climbing a grade, and the boys found no difficulty in following their guide. As they proceeded slowly toward the forward end of the coach Dave found a chance to nudge Jimmie.

"If we only knew what was about here, this would be a grand chance, don't you know, to give them the slip."

"What do you mean, give them the slip?"

"Why, drop off the train and fade away into the landscape somewhere hereabouts!" declared Dave with a glance over his shoulder.

"With the day just opening, like switching on all the electric lights in the world!" objected Jimmie. "The intention of the gentleman from Vancouver is excellent, but I'm afraid that his execution of the maneuver

would be decidedly rotten. It won't do just now."

"Perhaps not," sighed Dave, "but just the same, I'd like to try it out once to see whether we could make a go of it."

"Nothing doing!" declared Jimmie. "We're under suspicion already, or I miss my guess. The events of the last few hours are enough to let us know that if we tried anything like that the Germans wouldn't take kindly to any such plan. We wouldn't get very far, I fear."

"All right, then," agreed Dave. "I guess you're right."

"Sure I am!" went on Jimmie reassuringly. "Just leave it to me, old chap, and we'll grab the first opportunity that comes along with a genuine Frank Gotch toe hold and hang on till we put the German shoulders to the mat for the count. Leave it to me."

"I'll be with you for all I'm worth!" declared Dave.

Their conversation had attracted the attention of the officer, who now commanded silence on their part.

"We are now approaching the Kaiser's apartment," that worthy stated, with a show of reverence as he pronounced the title of his superior. "You shall not talk until you are asked to do so."

"Correct!" came Jimmie's reply. "We will keep as still as mice."

The three were admitted in response to the officer's knock, and the boys found that the little compartment was now somewhat crowded. Their presence filled the place until there was not a vacant seat.

For some moments as the train rolled along the upgrade the Kaiser paid no attention to them, busying himself over a bundle of papers.

At length he looked up and searched the boys carefully with his piercing gaze. After he had apparently taken a complete inventory of the two boys—one in the uniform of his own Uhlans and the other in the uniform of the Boy Scouts—he turned to one of his aides.

"What is the charge you wish to bring against these young men?"

"That of being spies and tampering with the aeroplane last night!" came the startling answer.

CHAPTER XVIII

PURSUIT

As the Eagle circled about in a widening spiral Harry and Jack looked over the rim of the fuselage at the country spreading like a gigantic map in bas-relief beneath them.

A tiny glow from the cowl lamp in front of the pilot's position showed Ned that the Eagle was now headed almost directly west, while the indicators showed an altitude of approximately three thousand feet. At a speed approximating forty miles per hour the great bird-like machine winged its way with its burden of adventurers.

"Tell you what, boys," Jack said presently, growing weary of trying to discover features in the obscurity below that covered the landscape, "this makes me feel just like I imagine that old guy must have felt when he went out after the Golden Fleece or something or other."

"Who was that?" asked Harry as he reached for the binoculars for the purpose of scanning their position in the hope of discerning some

indication of their whereabouts. "What are you talking about?"

"Well, I guess it was Jason," answered Jack. "Remember the stories Ned was reading to us about those old Greeks and others?"

"Oh, yes, now I do remember. But where do we resemble him?"

"Well, he went out after a great prize, and we are after the same sort of thing, only with us we want live game. We are after the prize of Jimmie's freedom and safety."

"Good thought!" cried Ned. "And, like the chap in the story, I am sure we'll go after the prize with the same determination and resolve to win out at all costs."

"You're right, we will!" exclaimed Harry with vigor. "We won't rest content until we have Jimmie away from those German Uhlans!"

"And Dave, too!" put in Jack. "We can't forget the fact that he wants to get back as well as Jimmie. And he's done us pretty good service, while we're speaking about him."

"That he has," declared Ned. "I wonder just where those two young rascals may be at this minute. I hope we're not running ahead of them and missing them in the running."

"They were going west by train unless Jimmie was greatly mistaken when he gave us

those signals from the hilltop," said Jack. "Now, if they got going soon after we dropped Dave into their camp, we ought to be able to see their train soon."

"Are we anywhere near the line of railroad?" asked Harry, peering through the glasses in an effort to sweep the surrounding country.

"We are not a great distance away, at any rate," answered Ned as he gave a touch to the levers to straighten the Eagle from a dip due to running into an air pocket. "It should be near here, I think."

"I think I can see an illumination away to the southward that looks like it might be a locomotive," announced Harry.

"Let me have the glasses a moment," requested Jack. "Maybe I can pick up something. But," he added, "I think the railroad will be more to the northward. We passed Cracow some time ago."

"Guess you're right, after all," agreed Harry. "Take a look over to the northward and see what you can see."

"More than likely," said Jack, preparing to shift his position slightly, the better to observe the landscape to the northward, "it'll be a case of the bear going over the mountain to see what he could see. The other side of the mountain

is about all we can discover. In this darkness we can't get much of a view."

"It won't do any harm to look, anyway," ventured Harry.

Jack accordingly raised the binoculars and swept the northward section of the country. Nothing could be seen that was of interest, and he swung around, the better to complete his view.

"Great smokes!" he ejaculated as he peered toward the rear. "If they're not coming after us, I'll be a Dutchman myself!"

"Who?" asked Ned eagerly. "Can you see the train?"

"Train nothing!" declared Jack. "It's those bloomin' Dutchmen from the village! They've evidently got a supply of gasoline to replace what we stole and are coming up like a greyhound after a rabbit. That's some speedy plane they've got!"

"Can you see how many men are riding?" asked Ned.

"Can't make them out," replied Jack. "Suppose you look a bit. My eyes get tired from the strain. Guess I look too hard."

"Take the levers a minute," requested Ned, "and I'll see what I can see. Maybe they're not after us at all."

"Well, if they're not after us, they stick to

the trail most remarkably close, that's all I can say!" remarked Jack as he prepared to take Ned's place at the pilot's position.

"I can see them now," announced Ned as he leveled the glasses at the pursuing plane. "They are getting nearer all the while. It seems to me I can discover three men in it, too."

"I suppose they're too far away to discover what they look like," suggested Harry. "I can just see the machine now myself."

"It's pretty hard to tell what they are," said Ned, "only they seem to be pretty well protected with helmets and heavy clothes."

"Wish we were in the same comfortable condition," smiled Harry. "I'm slightly chilly myself and hope you are the same, thank you."

"Greatly obliged," returned Ned. "You are entirely correct."

"Look here," interposed Jack, "if you fellows are sufficiently frozen, I've got a scheme to propose. Want to hear it?"

"Slip us an earful," said Harry in response to Jack's query, although he winced slightly at Ned's reproachful glance, for he knew well the older lad's aversion to slang.

"Suppose the railroad is over there to the northward," went on Jack. "In that case, Jimmie and Dave'll be in that direction. Now,

by running over that way we can get nearer to them and at the same time discover whether that other machine is following us."

"Fine!" declared Ned. "Head to the northward, and if they are after us we'll quickly find it out. Then we can determine what to do."

Accordingly Jack shifted the levers and the Eagle swung sharply to the northward. Ned kept the glasses leveled at the following machine in an effort to discover the movements of its pilot.

Scarcely had the Eagle regained a level keel after the sharp turn before Ned's exclamation of dismay attracted the attention of his chums.

"They're after us as sure as shooting!" he cried. "They're cutting across the corner of the angle. That'll give them some advantage. It won't pay us to try any more dodging if we want to outrun them."

"Sure!" declared Jack. "The pursuer always has the shorter course to travel if the one running away tries to tack about any."

"In that case it would be best to keep straight ahead and trust to our speed to carry us away from them," suggested Harry.

"Yes," agreed Jack, "stern chases are always long chases."

"Do you suppose we can give them the slip somehow without using up all our gasoline?"

asked Jack. "I don't want to get too far away from Jimmie and Dave, either. Can't we work it somehow?"

"If it were only a little lighter," ventured Harry, "we might land somewhere and argue it out with them from behind a stone wall or trench."

"That wouldn't be very profitable," Ned argued. "If we should start anything like that we'd be in all kinds of trouble at once. Our best plan would, I think, be to cut and run for it to the westward. If they're after us and mean to catch us, they would try to follow. Even though this may be an army plane they are using, I believe the Eagle is capable of outrunning them."

"Then here goes for a fast ride," declared Jack, reaching for the handle controlling the mixing valve of the carburetor. "I'm going to slip in a little more air and shove the spark ahead a few notches."

"Hang onto your hat," laughed Harry. "If Jack gets the speed bug nicely working there won't be much left that isn't tied on!"

"Right you are," responded Jack as the Eagle seemed to fairly leap forward in answer to his touch. "Hang on tight!"

Jack's caution was needed, for the speed materially increased. Ned continued to keep

watch with the aid of the binoculars, while Harry scanned the surrounding country in an effort to make out any features that would guide them.

Presently the others were delighted to hear a cry from Ned.

"We're leaving them behind at last, boys!" he managed to shout as he sheltered his head from the stinging blast of air singing through the rigging of the Eagle. "They're getting smaller in the glasses!"

"Slow down, Jack," advised Harry. "Let's watch them a bit and see what they're going to do. Maybe it's only a trick."

"No, it isn't a trick," said Ned as the Eagle's speed decreased. "That plane is going to land, I believe. I think I can see a light on the ground a little to the northward of their position."

"Suppose we swing round in a big circle and see if we can discover what they are going to do," suggested Jack, reaching for the rudder levers. "If they're going to land and get assistance we ought to know it before it's too late. If they're giving up it'll be all right."

"Stand by to come about, then," agreed Ned. "It won't do any harm, and if we cut in the muffler we should be able to ride above them

without being discovered. The upper sky is very dark yet."

Accordingly Jack shifted the rudders and brought the Eagle sharply about, heading directly eastward again. As the plane proceeded to retrace the course so recently followed the lad brought the machine to a higher level and cut in the muffler, entirely deadening the clamor of the motors. He had been running with the exhaust partly open in order to obtain every bit of the engine's efficiency in the flight.

When the boys had reached an altitude that seemed sufficient Jack again described a circle in the air that brought them almost directly over the position to which the pursuing plane had descended.

"Ha!" cried Ned, turning the glasses downward. "I can see a train standing at a station. The grounds are lighted by shaded electric lights, I believe, and there seem to be soldiers moving about beside the train. I saw a shower of sparks just then that looked as if they came from a switch engine. I'll bet that's a railroad terminal and the train is one moving troops westward from Peremysl to Verdun!"

"Hope you are right and that the train has got Jimmie and Dave on it," put in Jack

eagerly. "Maybe we can get a chance to rescue them yet. What do you say to trying?"

"The chances would be very poor just now, I'm thinking," replied Harry doubtfully. "With all those soldiers there we wouldn't have much of a chance, especially as we are not able to communicate with the boys, even granting that they are on that train."

"Better give up the idea, then," regretfully acknowledged Jack.

"Can you make out anything, Ned?" asked Harry, peering downward.

"Nothing in particular," replied the lad. "It seems to me that the aviator is trying to start the plane again. I can see it at the station under the lights. Can you hear the exhaust of his engine?"

"I thought I did just then," replied Harry. "Listen!"

All three boys strained their ears to catch any possible sounds from below while the Eagle on noiseless wings circled high above the station grounds. A confusion of minor sounds came faintly up.

Out of the murmur a crashing, rending noise was heard.

CHAPTER XIX

LESE MAJESTY

"But we're not spies!" snapped Jimmie truculently. "We wouldn't be spies for anything!"

"Silence!" commanded the officer in a voice denoting his displeasure at the interruption. "It will be best for you to keep silent."

"You may give your answer to the charges if you desire," said the Kaiser in a not unkindly tone. "But," he went on, "you will remember that if the report of Captain von Liebknecht is at all correct matters look rather unfavorable for you at present."

"I'll admit that latter part without argument," said Jimmie, much relieved that he was being given an opportunity to speak. "Things look rather odd, as you say, but it is only looks. The facts are that we are over in this country on a peaceful mission, and have refused to give information to either the Germans or the Russians. That rather squares the account, doesn't it?"

"In a measure, yes," admitted the Kaiser.

"But your presence with the Russian troops does not incline us to look with much favor upon yourself or your comrades. Further," he continued, "the fact that your comrades have a high-powered aeroplane in our territory and have tried to rescue you from our regiment appears as if they do not care to be open and frank with us. Can you explain that?"

"I think I can," replied Jimmie gravely. "I can see now that our actions would appear rather mysterious to your officers, but you must also remember that they refused to take our word for anything. They simply went ahead and acted on the opinion they received from first sight. Our statements were not given any weight at all."

"Perhaps the officers were a trifle over-zealous, we will admit," continued the Kaiser, "but you have been well treated, have you not?"

"Fairly well," replied Jimmie. "I may say," he added, "that we have been very well treated considering all things. But I'd like to have that little package that was taken from me."

The Kaiser turned an inquiring glance toward von Liebknecht.

"It is this little package to which I referred briefly in my statement," explained von Liebknecht, producing the packet that had been

rescued from the Cossack uniform by Jimmie when Otto had attempted to put the discarded clothes in the fire.

"And what do you say is in this packet?" inquired the Kaiser, addressing Jimmie, as he reached out a hand to take the parcel from von Liebknecht. "Is it your own property?"

"It was given to me by a man who was trying to make money selling munitions to the Russians," replied the lad. "He was a villain if ever there was one. He stole a lot of money in the United States and came over on a ship to Riga. He kidnapped me and had me enlisted in a Russian regiment of Cossacks, where he also found himself enlisted against his will. When an attack was made on a German troop train before the assault on Peremysl he was badly wounded."

"Ah, then you both were there?" asked the Kaiser interestedly.

"Yes," went on the boy. "When he found he was so badly wounded he gave me this packet and asked me to go back to New York, where he had put papers and other things in a safe deposit vault. He wanted me to try to straighten out some of his wrongdoings."

"Then this does not refer in any way to information that might be of value to our

enemy?" questioned the Kaiser, looking keenly at the lad.

"Not in the least!" declared Jimmie, returning the other's gaze frankly and fearlessly. "You are a good enough judge of human nature to determine whether I'm telling you the truth or not."

"I rather think you are telling the truth so far as you know it," was the answer, accompanied by a smile in recognition of the tribute the lad had paid. "But," he added, "is it not possible that the man himself may have been telling things that were not so in the hope that the information would fall into the hands of the Russians?"

"I don't believe it," returned Jimmie, positively. "He knew he was going to die, and tried, I believe, to right the wrongs he had done."

"No doubt you are correct. At any rate, I'm inclined to take a chance and return the packet to you if you agree to keep it as directed and do your best to follow the man's wishes."

"I'll readily do that!" cried Jimmie, stretching his hand for the extended packet. "I'll promise that as I promised him."

"Thank you," smiled Kaiser, in one of his rare moods of unbending from the dignity that

marked his demeanor. "I am trusting you."

"Then I suppose that we will be permitted to depart for America as quickly as we can locate our comrades?" asked Jimmie, eagerly.

A shake of the head preceded the reply to this question.

"That can hardly be permitted at this time," said the other in a deliberative manner. "There are several matters to be settled."

"Will we have to go into action with the regiment and fight?"

"Have you any objections to assisting us in return for the favors we have granted you?" asked the Kaiser with apparent surprise.

"Yes, sir, we have!" declared the boy, earnestly. "We are not at all concerned in the war and we don't wish to become engaged in it. We'd rather not shoot at anybody unless it is necessary to do so for our own protection or the defense of our country."

"Those are very noble sentiments, my lad," was the answer to this statement. "Just yet we cannot give you permission to depart, but we shall not require from you service that you are not able to give."

"Thank you, sir," both boys said in chorus.

"But, if you please," objected von Liebknecht, with a look of meaning in the direction of his superior, "the young men may be of

great value to us in the future, and I suggest that they be held in reserve for any emergency that may arise."

"Not a bad idea, I'm sure," agreed the Kaiser. Then, turning to the boys, he added, "You will, of course, be expected to make no attempt at escape. Your matter will be decided later on."

In company with the officer who had guided them to the compartment they returned to the rear of the coach and fell to discussing the prospects the future held for them.

They were awakened from a sound sleep into which they had fallen to find that the train had made another stop and that the regiment was disembarking. Men and horses were all about the track, baggage was being hastily unloaded and every indication showed that their journey by rail was at an end.

"Ho, hum!" yawned Jimmie, before beginning his setting up exercise, in which the lads found much benefit, "nothing to do till tomorrow, eh?"

"Looks that way, I declare!" said Dave. "But if I'm a judge, this is tomorrow itself. I wonder are we going into action."

"Something's brewing as sure as fate!" declared the other. "We wouldn't unload like this just for exercise on a fine morning."

"It is a fine morning, sure enough," agreed Dave, "but I think it is going to rain. I thought I heard thunder just now."

"Does sound remarkably like thunder," said Jimmie, with a glance at the sky, "but," he continued, "there isn't a cloud in the sky, and a thunder storm seems about the last thing we could expect."

"What on earth is it, then?" queried Dave, puzzled at the strange sound that came to their ears. "I see some of the Uhlans noticing it, too. Only they seem to be pleased about something."

"I know what it is!" announced Jimmie. "It's the sound of firing!"

"I believe you are correct, Jimmie," acknowledged Dave.

"Sure, I'm right!" declared the other. "Can't I tell what a cannon shot sounds like? I ought to, for I heard them some time ago, but from the other side of the lines."

"You did?" asked Dave, interestedly. "How was that?"

"Why," went on Jimmie, with just a touch of pride in his voice, "we were in France with the airship we had built before this present one. We got nicely tangled up with the battling forces and nearly got blown to bits once. We got lost in the fog above the lines where

the big shells were flying around like mosquitoes."

"My word!" was Dave's astonished ejaculation.

"Yes," continued the red headed lad, "we thought once or twice we were goners, but got out after all. The airship lived through all of it and finally was drowned in the North Sea as we were trying to get home. I was certainly sorry to lose that airship."

"But you were fortunate to escape without losing your lives."

"Sure were," was Jimmie's comment. "But look there! There's some movement on foot or I'm mistaken. Wonder what it is?"

The boys were not long left in doubt. An officer came toward them apparently in some haste. As he approached he signalled the two to follow him to a position where the Uhlans were mounting their horses.

"You will follow these men," he said, as the lads drew near. He indicated two soldiers nearby who were mounted and leading two horses.

"Hello, Otto!" said Jimmie with a smile, as he wrinkled his freckled nose. "And I declare! If little Fritz isn't on deck also!"

"Here comes the Kaiser and his staff," said

Jimmie, directly the line was at rest. "He seems to be in a hurry about something."

"They're stopping here," announced Dave.

A group of approaching horsemen, at one side of which rode the Kaiser, drew rein exactly opposite the two lads. Jimmie's mount, in a somewhat restive mood, refused to remain standing, but gave the lad some trouble. In his effort to quiet the animal the lad did not notice that he was gradually drawing closer and closer to the Kaiser.

Presently he succeeded in quieting the horse and took time to glance in the direction in which the Kaiser was peering through a pair of binoculars. The lad saw stretching far below him a gradual slope that had once been wooded by a forest. Now, however, there stood only the shattered stumps of trees, indicating that the place had been subjected to a most galling fire from the enemy.

A puff of smoke caught his attention. With a startled exclamation he pointed to a small object flying through the air straight toward the position occupied by himself and the Kaiser's staff.

The next moment he kicked the Kaiser's mount in the ribs and dug his heels into the flank of his own horse. Both leaped forward.

CHAPTER XX

CAPTURED

"What was that noise?" asked Jack, instantly, as he busied himself with the levers in an effort to maintain the position of the Eagle.

"That sounded to me like one perfectly good aeroplane going to smash—just like that!" answered Ned, leaning over the rim of the fuselage and peering through the glasses.

"Was it the German who was pursuing us?" asked Harry, eagerly.

"I believe it was," declared Ned. "Yes," he went on, "I can see the smashed plane there beside the train now. That's peculiar!"

"What's peculiar?" asked Jack. "The train being there, or the plane, or what? Please be a little more explicit."

"No nonsense, now!" Ned replied. "I mean its peculiar how that plane came to be smashed that way. I didn't see anything drop on it."

"Perhaps a piece of the machinery gave way as he was starting."

"It needn't worry us a particle to explain how it happened," said Harry. "It's enough to know that the fellow can't chase us."

"That's a good thing, anyway," was Ned's comment.

Had the lads only known how close they had been to being again pursued they might not have felt so easy in their minds, but they assumed that their presence was not known to others than the pilot of the wrecked mechine, and therefore felt secure.

"Now it's up to us to make a noise like a drum, I guess," said Jack.

"All right, let's get away from here as quickly as we can. If we hold a course a little south of west we ought to be able to follow the general line of the railroad and be able to overtake or meet Jimmie and Dave before they reach Verdun and are forced into the fighting."

Accordingly Jack increased the speed of the motors and brought the Eagle to the course suggested. Presently they were flying at good speed.

"Ned, I'm afraid," Harry said after some time. "Let's go lower."

"What's the matter, Harry? Does this altitude affect you?"

"Not in the least, except that it's cold. But

you see that unless we fly lower the first rays of the rising sun will strike us and we can be seen and located by any one on the ground. They will still be in the deep shadow and we will be in the brighter sunlight."

"I guess you're right, Harry," replied Ned, "and your suggestion is a good one. Suppose we do seek a lower level, Jack."

"All right, hang on to your eye teeth and we'll get onto the toboggan," replied the lad at the levers. "Going down!"

"It's plain we'll have to run quite low from now on," said Ned, as he laid aside the binoculars. "Daylight is coming on rapidly."

"We'll have to find a spot uninhabited enough for us to hide during the daytime," ventured Harry. "We can't let them see us."

"You're right," acquiesced Ned. "Suppose you take the glasses and tell me if that dark spot ahead there looks like a good spot to hide in. It appears to be a forest or at least woods of some sort."

"That's what it is," declared Harry, after an extended observation. "I don't altogether like the looks of the place, for there's a road of some sort running near the woods, but it's perhaps better than no place at all. If we can get to earth without being discovered we can hide behind those trees until dark again."

"Keep a sharp lookout, Ned, while Jack tries to land," advised Harry. "I'll watch from this side and if we see any one who might observe us we can easily be on our way again."

Lower and lower circled the plane under the guidance of Jack, whose experience in handling the great craft well fitted him for the task. With scarcely a bump the machine rested in a little grade not far from a brook overshadowed by the arching branches of trees.

"There!" sighed Ned, clambering from the fuselage and springing to earth. "The Eagle is a good little machine, all right, but it seems good to get the ground under foot once more."

"And I'm glad that we came down when we did, for a little longer up there," said Jack, pointing to the graying eastern sky, "and we'd have been fair targets for any old 'Schutzenfest' these chaps wanted."

"Right you are!" declared Harry. "And now what I'd like would be a real old fashioned imitation of three boys eating a hearty breakfast. Just a plain, common, every-day square meal, I mean."

"This is a pretty place," observed Ned, "all sheltered and obscure. We ought to be able to get a dandy bath there in that brook and then make whatever breakfast we want off the supplies we got from Peremysl."

"My appetite is just about now equal to that of our absent and red-headed friend McGraw," said Harry with a laugh. "I'm hungry."

"A bath first," cried Ned, beginning to disrobe, "then the eats."

Soon the lads had divested themselves of the German uniforms and were enjoying the plunge in the cool, clear water of the brook. Presently they emerged from the stream and again donned the uniforms they had taken from the room that was intended as a prison.

"Now," said Ned, as the three were again dressed, "what shall be the menu of the morning? With this glorious sun peeping over the tops of the hills to the eastward of us we ought to have a fine breakfast. The weather looks mighty fine."

"Yes," agreed Jack, "but it don't sound very fine. I thought I heard a rumble of thunder just now. Did you hear it?"

"No," replied Ned, "I can't say I did. Was it thunder?"

"Sounded like it," declared Jack. "There it goes again!"

"That don't sound like thunder exactly," said Harry. "I wonder what it can be. I thought it was a wagon passing a bridge."

Ned's face went rather pale as he faced his comrades.

"Boys," he stated, "I believe that must be the sound of cannon firing we hear. It is coming more regularly now!"

"Then we're pretty close to Verdun," was Harry's rejoinder.

"Yes, that's my idea, too," said Ned. "Let's get breakfast and be prepared for whatever may happen. We don't know what may come along so close to the lines as we are now, and we must not be napping."

"I'll get a bucket of water from the brook," volunteered Jack, "while you and Harry make ready the fire and get out the provisions."

"There's plenty of wood hereabouts, I see," put in Harry, "so I'll gather some wood for a fire and have it burned down to coals in no time."

"I rather think," objected Ned, "that we should not use wood."

"And why not, if you please, Mr. Scout Master?" asked Harry.

"Because wood lying on the ground has more or less dampness in it and is apt to give off a smoke that might be seen by some one."

"Always on the lookout for trouble!" declared Jack, as he took the bucket and started

for the brook. "Well, make a fire of any thing."

"Quite the contrary, Jack, as you know," protested Ned, laughingly. "I'm only trying to avoid trouble as much as possible, and a smoke now in this place would be a direct invitation to some one to investigate."

"Right again," returned Jack, "go to the head of the class."

"What shall I use, then, if not wood?" asked Harry.

"Make a gasoline stove like we used to do when we had plenty of fuel," answered Ned. We have sufficient so we can spare a small amount."

"Perhaps you'd better make the stove, Ned," said Harry. "You're better at it than I am. You've had more experience. I'll get the supplies out of the boxes. We'll want coffee, of course."

"Yes," agreed Ned, "bring some coffee, to be sure, and try to find that tin of bacon. I feel just like having a strip of bacon done nice and crisp. It begins to smell good already."

"How'd you like a nice Spanish omelette and French fried potatoes with some hot Parker House rolls and lots of rich yellow butter?"

"Hush, boy, you'll have me so fussed up I

can't light the fire," protested Ned. "I guess Jimmie's affliction is catching. I'm certainly getting an appetite or the appetite is getting me!"

He proceeded to at once prepare the "stove" by sharpening a stick about the size of a broom handle. When it was completed he thrust the sharp end into the soft earth and then withdrew it, leaving a hole about a foot or more deep. Another hole was made a short distance from the first, but slanted so that the lower ends would meet. The second hole was plugged up with a bit of turf.

"Now, then," said Ned, as he finished the first 'stove', "we want some gas. Can you bring it or shall I get it?"

"Here's the can," answered Harry, "I can fetch it. Make another."

Jack meanwhile had returned with the bucket of water and had filled the coffee pot, into which he put a quantity of coffee. This was then placed over one of the "stoves," while on the other was placed a bucket containing a quantity of beans, together with some of the cereal "sausage" found amongst the Russian supplies.

Presently the lads were sniffing, as an appetizing odor filled the air. A can of bacon was opened and set to sizzling in a frying pan.

"Wonder where we are, anyhow?" remarked Ned as the lads lay stretched at full length on the grass, waiting for the stew to cook.

"Don't know," responded Jack, removing the frying pan from the fire. "Suppose after we eat we get the wireless to work?"

"Good idea," remarked Ned, as the three gathered about the pot of stew. "After breakfast we'll draw straws to see who does the dishes and the other two will string the aerials."

"There won't be any dishes to wash," declared Harry, "if you fellows are as hungry as I am. There won't be any need."

"Maybe so," laughed Ned, helping himself to the bacon and coffee.

For a time the boys gave themselves over to a discussion of the most excellent breakfast. When they had finished, Ned said:

"Now, Jack, you and Harry get out the wireless while I clean up."

In a few moments the two were busy at their task selecting two small trees not far apart to act as masts. The equipment that had been stowed in one of the lockers was spread on the grass and they waited for Ned to return from the brook, where he had gone to wash the dishes.

"All right, Ned," said Jack. "Turn on the juice and we'll go."

Ned stepped to the aeroplane and started the engine in an attempt to operate the dynamo. No explosions followed his efforts.

"The engine's stalled!" he cried. "What's the matter?"

"Why, the spark plugs are gone!" declared Ned. "And look here," he went on, "here are tracks showing some one has been here!"

Jack and Harry sprang to the side of their chum. They easily detected the tracks mentioned by Ned. They were those of a man wearing heavy shoes or boots and led away through the thicket.

"After him, boys, while the tracks are fresh," said Jack.

All three boys began to follow the tracks. They led around a clump of brush near the aeroplane and seemed to be pointing in the direction of the hilltop to the westward.

"What's this?" said Jack. "Looks like other tracks here."

The lads gathered closely about the spot. A lasso whizzed through the air and settled about their shoulders. A jerk brought them locked close together. Another tripped them into a heap.

CHAPTER XXI.

ESCAPED PRISONERS

When Jimmie's toe prodded the Kaiser's horse in the ribs, that animal gave a mighty spring and bounded from his position. Usually a tractable, though mettlesome beast, the horse was greatly surprised at the treatment he was receiving, and it is not surprising that he made every effort to escape the punishment.

At the first movement of his comrade, Dave had urged his own horse forward in the expectation that Jimmie would attempt escape.

So swiftly had the movement been executed by Jimmie that none of the officers near by had been able to intercept the flight of the three.

Before the Kaiser could check the mad rush of his mount and bring the noble animal to a quivering stop, considerable distance had been covered. Jimmie rode on the Kaiser's right flank, his own horse's shoulder close to the other's saddle. Dave followed immediately behind Jimmie so close that when the halt was made he fairly crowded Jimmie beside the Kaiser. He was still mystified when they stopped.

With a face livid with wrath at the treatment, the Kaiser turned toward Jimmie. The next instant he began a forceful speech. It was never delivered. Jimmie slipped from his horse and began to drag the other from his mount. He was too excited for coherent speech.

"Young man—," began the other in a severe tone.

"Shut up!" stormed Jimmie. "Get off your horse, quick! It's coming!"

As he spoke, the boy, looking earnestly into the face of the man he had pursued, pointed toward the French lines and in the direction of the spot where the hasty flight had begun.

Dave glanced back to see a knot of officers and Uhlans closely packed about the very spot where the three had stood a moment before. As he looked he shivered slightly. A huge black object was hurtling through the air. It landed in the center of the group, bearing down with a shriek of agony a horse and its rider.

Instinctively Jimmie and Dave had thrown their arms up to cover their faces. By this means they had protected themselves in a degree from the force of the flying scraps of earth that stormed upon them like hail. They were covered with dirt to a woeful degree.

As the rain of dirt ceased Jimmie looked up

at the man he had tried so hard to rescue. His face bore a look of solicitude.

"I tried to get you out of there," he said. "I saw it coming."

"A pretty story!" stormed the other. "What conduct is this?"

In amazement Jimmie drew back a pace. He grasped the bridle reins of his horse in his left hand. Looking keenly at the mounted man, the lad recognized the fact that his intentions had been misunderstood. Without another word the lad mounted his animal.

"Where are you going, Jimmie?" asked Dave anxiously as Jimmie wheeled his mount. "What are you going to do now? Shall we make a break?"

"I guess we've made break enough," replied Jimmie with set jaw. "Here I go and rescue one perfectly good Kaiser from a dropping shell that he don't see, and now he gets sore at me for doing it. I'm going back to the position where I was ordered to stand, and they can all be shot to pieces next time for all the help they get from me!"

"Then I'm going with you!" declared Dave. "Come on!"

Gravely Jimmie returned to the very rim of the crater that nad been dug in the solid earth by the bursting of the gigantic shell. Here he

halted, drew himself erect in the saddle and waited. Dave drew alongside.

In another instant the two were surrounded by officers and Uhlans.

"Dismount at once!" ordered an officer.

Jimmie glanced quickly at the man and discovered him to be none other than von Liebknecht, the man who had been so closely concerned in Jimmie's recent experiences. Not deigning a reply, the lad obeyed. His action was quickly followed by Dave.

Following an order rapidly given in German, one of the Uhlans urged his horse forward and grasped the reins of the two horses. He fairly jerked the leathers from the hands of the boys and led the two away.

"My word!" declared Dave with emphasis. "We're in for it now!"

"I wonder just what they're going to do?" asked Jimmie in a whisper.

"Firin' squad at sunrise, most likely!" said Dave. "We're now, as I understand it, criminals of the worst sort."

"I don't get you," puzzled Jimmie. "What's the big idea?"

"We've committed one of the worst crimes in the calendar!" declared Dave. "As I understand it, we've meddled with the person of the Kaiser, and that's only one degree less

awful than saying horrid things about him. That's what I've been told, at any rate."

"Great frozen hot boxes!" ejaculated Jimmie. "Is it a crime to save a man's life when you get the chance?"

"I can't just say how they'll look at it," replied Dave. "But here comes the old top himself. Maybe he'll have a word to say."

Von Liebknecht began what seemed to the lads to be an apology, but was cut short by the Kaiser, who gave a command in German. Without attempting to complete his unfinished speech, the Captain repeated the command to an aide standing near, and he in turn addressed two Uhlans.

Much to their surprise, the boys were confronted by their old acquaintances, Otto and Fritz, who gave their orders in a single word.

"Vorwarts!" came the command in crisp tones as the two crowded their horses almost upon the two lads.

"That means 'Hike!'" explained Jimmie, turning to Dave.

"Here goes, then," returned Dave, stepping out bravely.

"I say, Otto," began Jimmie presently, "where are we going?"

"Verboten!" came the only answer the Uhlan would offer.

"Ha!" cried Jimmie. "I know what that means. I've seen a good many signs with that word on it. It means that we are forbidden to walk on the grass, breathe, live, eat, or do anything else without permits."

"No, no, Jimmie," explained Dave. "He means that he is forbidden to tell you where we are headed for. Isn't that it?"

"I don't know and don't much care!" was the other's reply. "They are welcome to start a goat farm any time they wish. They've got mine for a starter. Of all my going a-fishing, this is the limit."

After about half an hour's walk they found themselves near a building that had evidently been a farm residence. In common with many other rural establishments of Germany, this place had been built with the barns attached to the dwelling house.

Into what had been the cow stable the boys were conducted by their guards. A ladder stood in one corner, leading up through a trap door to the fodder loft above. Up this ladder the boys were directed.

"Fine little old prison!" declared Jimmie contemptuously.

"Well, it might be worse," said Dave consolingly. "We're here yet."

"Yes, and if I ever get another chance at the

Germans," declared Jimmie with vigor, "I'll punch their heads as hard as I can!"

"We might as well make ourselves comfortable," suggested Dave.

"Not on your life!" cried Jimmie heatedly. "From now on I'm going to make every move in the calendar to get out of this place and away from those Germans. If I ever get back to America I'll never eat another bit of sauer kraut as long as I live!"

Dave could not repress a laugh at this outburst. He could sympathize with Jimmie's attitude, for he felt that they were being unjustly treated.

"How are we going to give them the slip?" asked Jimmie, beginning a systematic search of the place. "Are there any windows?"

"There are two on the east side," answered Dave.

"Now, then, let's tear up the bed sheets and knot them together," was Jimmie's next suggestion, delivered in a half jesting mood.

"A rope would be better," offered his companion. "Let's look for one."

Presently he gave a cry and stooped to pick up an object at his feet.

"What do you think of this?" he said gleefully as he held aloft the end of a line nearly as thick as his finger. "Isn't that luck?"

"My word!" said Dave heartily. "That's the silver lining, all right!"

"Now to get a cleat or something across that window so we can take the rope with us!" urged Jimmie. "Hurry, Dave, hurry!"

They lost no time in doubling the line and passing the ends out of the window. The loop which they still held was caught beneath the corners of the window frame so that it would remain in position until the end was loosened by the person descending.

Ahead Jimmie could make out the outlines of an aeroplane in an open space. Following Dave's pointing finger, the lad saw a man in Uhlan's uniform rapidly running through the wood in the direction of the barn.

A noise in advance of their position attracted his attention. He gripped Dave's arm warningly and pointed to three figures in Uhlan uniform moving about in the growth of underbrush.

Dave quickly unslung the coil of line from his shoulder and proceeded to reeve a slip noose in one end. When he had adjusted the noose to his satisfaction the lad moved silently forward, crouching as he went.

With a dexterous throw the lad sent the loop of line over the three figures standing close together. Jimmie lent a hand to drag it tight.

CHAPTER XXII

HELD UP!

"Pull, Jimmie, pull like the mischief!" cried Dave as the line tightened about the forms beyond the shrubbery.

"Pulling!" answered Jimmie, throwing his weight onto the line behind Dave and straining every muscle in an effort to keep it taut.

Presently they felt the tide turning in their favor.

"Pull it taut, Jimmie!" cried Dave. "Keep them there until I can manage to tie them. Don't slacken an inch or they'll get up."

"Leave it to me," panted Jimmie, walking around the trunk of a small tree with the free end of the lasso. "I'll take a turn around this tree and they'll go some to get away. I'll hold 'em!"

With movements that counted, the lad seized a small stone lying near, laid the end of the line across a larger one and pounded vigorously in an effort to sever a length of the lasso.

Almost as quickly as the task could have

been accomplished with a knife Dave had cut off the desired piece of rope with which to tie the captives. In another moment he dashed through the thicket in which the three prisoners were struggling.

Jimmie, hanging onto the lasso with grim determination and taking in every bit of slack given by the struggling trio, was startled to hear his companion emit a shriek of astonishment. A glance over his shoulder told the lad that something unusual was happening beyond the bushes.

"Hurry up, Dave!" he advised. "I can't hold 'em much longer!"

"Let go, let go!" cried Dave, laughing and dancing about.

"What's the matter?" asked Jimmie incredulously. "Gone crazy?"

"My word, but this is funny!" laughed Dave, gasping for breath. "Here are the boys, who were looking for us, and instead of rescuing us we have captured them. Let go that line and let 'em up!"

"What?" was Jimmie's open-mouthed question. "What's that?"

"Sure enough!" declared Dave, swinging his arms to indicate that he wanted Jimmie to give more slack to the line. "It's the boys!"

"Say that again, please!" cried Jimmie,

dropping the lasso and bounding forward. "That's good news if it's true."

Jimmie lost no time in convincing himself that Dave was indeed correct in his statement. One glance at the struggling trio and he sat down upon the grass, where he doubled up with laughter.

"Well," was Jack's scornful admonition, "better stop and save some of it for another occasion. You might need it."

"Oh, ho, ho!" laughed Jimmie. "This is the best joke yet!"

"Where's the joke?" asked Harry, struggling to his feet and throwing off the loop of the lasso. "This is no joke for us!"

"It's the best ever!" declared Jimmie. "Here I was going to be shot at sunrise for this 'lese majesty' business, and now in only an hour I have a chance to make the capture of my young life!"

"Shot at sunrise?" queried Ned, joining the group. "What do you mean—shot at sunrise? Is it another joke?"

"Well, it wouldn't have been much of a joke if they'd carried it out, but the way things stand it is decidedly a good joke all round."

"Would you like to step down to the camp and tell us about it?"

"Just invite us and see!" declared the lad,

reaching for the lasso and coiling it neatly. "We came out here just for the purpose, boys!"

"You did?" inquired Jack. "Why, how'd you know we were here?"

"Oh," went on Jimmie with a lofty air, "everybody pretty near knows you're here. Next time you'd better be careful and shut the dampers when you make a fire. That smoke was a dead give-away!"

"Ah, ha, smarty!" declared Jack. "That's where you're wrong. We didn't make any smoke at all. So that punctures your balloon."

"Well, anythow," went on Jimmie unabashed, "a little bird told us."

"Now, see here, Jimmie," put in Ned as the five boys started for the camp near the Eagle, "tell me the exact truth. It may have serious consequences if you don't. Does anyone know we are here?"

"Not that I know of, Ned," was Jimmie's sober reply. "We just stumbled onto you as you were tracking something in the woods."

"Oh, that reminds me," Ned said, halting. "We were on the track of some fellow who visited our position and took out the spark plugs from our engines. We were following his tracks in the woods when you came."

"What sort of a guy was he?" asked Jimmie, intensely interested.

"I don't know," answered Ned. "We haven't seen him yet."

"Didn't he leave any signs at all?" went on Jimmie. "Did he come and go in an airship, or did he have wings and fly through the air?"

"Neither," declared Ned. "He left some pretty fair tracks."

"Then we'll get him!" asserted Jimmie, positively. "He can't get away. Once we get on his trail he might as well quit!"

"Good boy, Jimmie!" laughed Ned. "You're a sight for sore eyes. And," he went on, "it's a pleasure to have your optimism to help."

"Thanks!" drily responded the Wolf. "Where are his tracks?"

"Right around here at the front of the machine near the engine."

"See anything, Dave?" asked Jimmie, at once, as the boys grouped about the Eagle, being careful not to tread in the tracks left by the one who had meddled with their engines.

"Yes," responded Dave, instantly. "He was a shortish chap, you know, because he had to stand on his toes here to reach the engines."

"And I think he was a Uhlan," went on Jimmie, pointing to other tracks. "I can see the mark of the spur chain under his instep."

"He must have put his hand right here," added Dave, indicating a spot on the forward wings that showed grimy finger marks. "He had a scar extending across all four fingers. See the print on it?"

"I'll bet I know who it was!" declared Jimmie, seizing Dave by the shoulder. "If that wasn't Otto, I'll go back and enlist all over!"

"Sure enough," replied Dave. "He was just about that height, and of course he wore spurs and all that. I don't know about the scar."

"Well, we will look for a short, heavy set Uhlan with a scar on his hand, and when we find him we'll choke those plugs out of him!"

"Shall we start after him now, boys?" inquired Jack.

"I vote 'No' on the original question," said Jimmie, instantly. "It's pretty near dinner time and I'm as hungry as bears ever get and then some. Have you got anything to eat, Ned?"

"Sure we have," was Ned's hearty response. "Got some mighty fine food, too. You'll like it, I'm sure. Those tracks can wait."

"Just right!" declared the lad. "Dave and I are starved! Just throw us together a little fried ham and some scalloped potatoes, a piece of Yorkshire pudding with some roast beef for

Dave, here, and a few loaves of bread with a side of creamed cauliflower and some peas and carrots. Two or three helpings of succotash and some green onions wouldn't go bad either. With a couple of cups of coffee and some chocolate eclairs and a cream puff with a little ice cream and some lemon pie we could manage to worry along until tea time."

"Good night!" said Ned. "Wouldn't you rather take pot luck?"

"Oh," responded Jimmie, lightly, "any little old thing you wish."

"Then we'll give you some stew," announced Ned.

"Here's hoping, Ned," Jimmie said, laying a hand on Ned's arm, "that it isn't cabbage stew with bunches of vegetarian sausages cooked in it."

"Why?" inquired Ned. "Don't you like that sort of food?"

"Oh," exclaimed Jimmie, with a gesture of disgust, "we've had nothing else for about four years! I feel just like poor old Ben Gunn in 'Treasure Island.' I'd like a little civilized food—a piece of cheese or something like that. Don't say stew to me or I'll quit you cold."

"If you want a piece of cheese, take me," declared Jack. "I feel mightily ashamed of

the way we let you two sneak up on us and catch us."

"Oh, that's all right," offered Jimmie with great magnanimity, "you really captured yourself, you know. Dave and I let you walk right up onto us before Dave swung that rope. I must get that trick."

"How did you learn that knack, Dave?" asked Ned, admiringly.

"Oh, that's quite easy, you know," replied the other with becoming modesty. "I've spent some time in Alberta where there are cattle and I learned to shoot and ride a horse and throw the rope pretty well."

"That's quite an accomplishment, all right," offered Jack.

"Agreed!" announced Jimmie. "But," he went on, "we're losing time and I'm losing flesh while you argue about it. Leave Dave alone, now. Can't you see him blushing over the praise you're giving him? Let's hustle about and get some eats started. I'm hungry, I tell you!"

"All right, Jimmie, your wants shall be supplied. We'll make another pot of coffee and all hands will take a cup with you for luck."

"This all happened so suddenly," said Ned, as the five lay about the fires waiting for the cooking to be finished, "that I haven't had a

chance to ask you a question nor tell you how overjoyed I am to have you with us again. But I'm really delighted. How did it happen?"

"Well, they took us with them after Dave knocked over one of their tents," began Jimmie, with a sly look at his companion. "If it hadn't been for that plucky kid over there, I most likely would have lost my temper two or three times and tried to whip the whole German army."

"Oh, I say, you know," declared Dave. "He's putting it on too thick! I really wasn't much help at all. It was Jimmie who got the Kaiser into a good humor and then saved his life!"

"Go on, go on!" urged Ned, excitedly. "Tell us about it quickly!"

In response to the invitation, Jimmie and Dave together told the story of their adventures since last seeing their chums. Jimmie was in turn told of the exciting scenes through which the three boys had passed, and to him also were made known the circumstances through which Dave had joined the party. As the boys finally drew their narratives to a conclusion, Jimmie, who had followed the tales of his comrades with interest, turned to Ned and said:

"And so you were on the point of rescuing me when that fellow shot the rope by which Dave was hanging and you thought it was all off!"

"You are right, we thought things were going wrong with us then."

"And after that you pretty nearly got into a trap yourselves."

"Yes and we were compelled to exchange our perfectly good uniforms for some old rags that would disgrace a wharf rat!" was Ned's indignant response. "Then we simply took the privilege of putting on these garments. They are not what we would have chosen, but they match yours."

"They fooled Dave and myself, all right," laughed Jimmie. "We thought that we had caught a mess of German soldiers."

"That simply goes to show us, boys," gravely commented Ned, "that we ought to be extremely careful about our outward appearance. It's so easy for others to mistake us for what we are not."

"Hands up!" the boys heard a rough voice say. They turned to see a rifle muzzle showing through a clump of bushes.

CHAPTER XXIII

TABLES TURNED

"What's coming off here?" asked Jimmie, jumping to his feet.

"Halt!" cried the voice from the shrubbery again as Jimmie rose.

"Who's there?" asked the lad, wheeling toward the low undergrowth which concealed their visitor. "Come out into the open if you dare."

"Ach, yes!" replied the other. "I dare come out. You will all stand—and in a line, please. Aber you don'dt, I shoot!"

"What's this," asked Ned, "a hold-up or a joke?"

"Nein," the newcomer replied. "Aber you don'dt line up dere you find oudt it is no joke, not. Beside yourself stand, quick!"

"This is enough to make anybody fairly beside themselves!" Jimmie declared, unable to repress his tendency toward a joke.

"Come on out, you Dutchman," taunted Jimmie in a moment. "I can see you crouching there and see your uniform. Come on out!"

As the faces appeared, Jimmie gave a gasp of astonishment.

"Otto! Fritz!" he almost shrieked. "We left you guarding that old barn up there. How does it come that you are here?"

"My post I deserted," he began, stepping from the bushes, but with his rifle still cautiously pointed toward the lads. "This country is familiar to me, for that house was my uncle's. Many times have I in this brook waded and swam. Today I thought of it when we over the hill came and when we had put you in the barn I came right here to see the beautiful brook once more and hear the birds singing in the trees."

"Otto, open your left hand and let me see what you have in it!" commanded Jimmie, as the other finished speaking.

"Nothing have I in my hand," declared Otto, opening and extending the member palm outward. "See, nothing in there is!"

"Oh, I thought you had the spark plugs from the Eagle," remarked the lad. "You know you took them out. Where did you put them?"

"In my pocket have they gone," answered Otto, simply as if stating the most casual fact. "They are all there safe and sound."

"So I see," acknowledged Jimmie. "That's

very obvious. What are you going to do now that you and Fritz have returned?"

"We shall take you back to the barn and put you in the loft once again," declared Otto in the same tone of voice he might have used in commenting on the fact that the sun was shining.

"Oh, you shall, shall you?" almost sneered Jimmie. "All right, but you wouldn't put us back there hungry, would you? We were just about to eat a little lunch. This won't be quite as good as you used to get at Dick Stein's place, but it's eatable at any rate. If you think you could eat a bit, we'll ask you to join us."

"I can not eat now," replied the other. "I must guard you as prisoners. But if you are hungry, we will let you eat."

"Oh, I say," protested Jimmie, "you'll have at least a cup of coffee with us! That isn't sociable to stand and hold a gun at a fellow's head while he's eating. It looks rather rough, too!"

"You are now prisoners," replied Otto, shaking his head.

"Why, of course, we are!" admitted the boy with an attempt at a laugh. "We're prisoners in more ways than one. You have the spark plugs and we couldn't make a decent get-away

if we tried. Besides, you two fellows have your rifles and we are unarmed."

"I guess you've got us dead to rights," put in Dave.

"Sure you have," resumed Jimmie. "Now, I'll tell you what," he went on, "you sit here," indicating a position between the fire and the aeroplane, "and we'll sit on the opposite side of the fire. You may have your rifles across your laps or ready at your side. If we break and run for it, you may shoot as fast as you please."

"That's fair enough," urged Ned. "It isn't just the square thing to take us prisoners without letting us get some food."

"See here," continued Jimmie, reaching out a hand toward the coffee pot bubbling over the tiny flame and lifting the lid, "did you ever smell better coffee in your life? That's worth drinking, I say!"

"Dot's goot cooffee!" announced Fritz, solemnly. "I take a cup."

"Sure, you'll both have a cup!" declared Jimmie.

"That's a real compliment, Otto," laughed Jimmie, winking at Dave as he spoke. "When a German admits that any other nation on earth can make good coffee it is going some. The Germans can make real coffee!"

"We generally let Dave pour the coffee, because he's an extra boy in the crowd and we make the newcomers do all the heavy work, but he's awkward at it yet owing to his just recently coming off a cattle ranch in Canada, where he had to lasso a lot of cattle every day. This time I'm going to pour the coffee myself."

As Jimmie spoke he glanced back toward Dave, sitting with the others.

"Now, you just sit there, Dave," Jimmie chattered on, "until I tell you to move. Remember," he added, "I'm doing this part of it. All you are to do is to follow instructions. You're better at the lasso than you are at pouring coffee!"

"Yes, I guess that's the truth," admitted Dave with a mock sign of resignation at finding his short-comings flaunted before strangers.

It was well that the meal was served in the open, for Jimmie poured until every cup ran over, thereby wasting much of the liquid.

"Have some more, won't you?" he asked, grasping the coffee pot.

"Just a little more," replied Otto. "I never had better."

"Why," cried Jimmie in a surprised tone, "the pot is almost empty. I guess you boys

didn't make very much, did you? Here, Dave," he hurried on, "you chase yourself up to the Eagle and get some of that coffee out of the locker on the right-hand side. We'll brew another pot of it. I haven't begun to eat yet."

"See how quickly you can lasso a cup or two of the real stuff and hurry back here," commanded Jimmie. "We'll have more in a jiffy."

"Have a little of this stew while you're waiting," urged Ned, extending the pot of stew toward the soldiers. "It's mighty good!"

Ned and Jimmie rattled on in a whirlwind of conversation to keep the attention of the soldiers in their own direction. So absorbed were Otto and Fritz in listening to the chatter that they failed to hear the faint whistle of a rope through the air, and it was not until the noose of Dave's lasso settled about their shoulders and they were jerked incontinently backward that they suspected anything wrong.

Otto and Fritz were compelled to surrender to a superior force. Lengths of small line secured from the Eagle were brought by Dave when he saw that the two were securely held by his companions.

"Let me get at this chap's pockets a moment," said Ned, advancing. "I think he has some spark plugs that would look better in an-

other place. We can use them to good advantage ourselves."

"Just the thing!" cried Jimmie, gleefully. "How thoughtful of him to bring them back here so we could run the little old Eagle."

Ned lost no time in producing the plugs and fitting them into position.

"Now we're off!" declared Jimmie. "Let's get the cooking utensils aboard and beat it out of here. We won't want no wireless now!"

"For one, I want to get to some place where I can exchange this uniform for some real clothes!" stated Jack, vehemently.

"And I want a real feed!" protested Jimmie. "I haven't eaten in weeks. All I could do was to lunch along on this awful grub!"

"All right, boys, I guess you're right," Ned agreed with a laugh. "We'll load up and be on our way even if it is daylight."

"Won't the Germans see us rise out of here and take a shot at us?"

"What if they do?" scorned Jimmie. "They'll be so busy with all this fighting they won't have time to chase us very far. Hear those cannons going all the time?" he went on. "They're wasting a lot of good powder shooting at the Frenchmen and the allies!"

As the aeroplane rose above the tree tops, two other planes were sighted high overhead.

CHAPTER XXIV

A STERN CHASE

"Gee! I'm mighty glad Otto and Fritz came along just as they did to bring us these spark plugs and rifles!" Jimmie announced as the Eagle soared over the surrounding woods.

"It was rather kind of them," answered Jack. "It looks like we might need them, too, if those are German planes up there."

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to rise as high as we can, Ned?" asked Harry. "If we get well up, we'll be able to see where we are and can have some idea where we are going."

"Up we go," agreed Ned at the levers, as he tilted the planes for an ascent. "I'm sure we need to get some idea of our location."

"They see us!" cried Harry, who had been using the binoculars. "I think they're both heading toward us now! They're coming fast, too!"

"Let them come!" declared Dave. "If the Eagle lives up to the reputation Jimmie has given her, we'll be able to outdistance them."

"Maybe we would on a straight-away run,"

agreed Harry, "but we are one to their two, and they probably have guns aboard."

"What's the chances of landing and meeting them on a more equal footing?" inquired Jack. "Is that at all possible?"

"It's possible to land," replied Ned, "but I don't think we'd have as good a chance as we have up here. Look down there and see."

"Where are all the soldiers?" asked Harry, presently. "I can't see a single soldier anywhere. But," he added, "the guns are fired."

"They are all in bomb-proof trenches or else back of the hilltops," said Ned. "I believe that those aeroplanes are scouting around to give word to the gunners whether their aim has been correct or not."

"Well, if this is war," observed Dave, "I'm going to be glad to get back home once more. This doesn't look civilized to me."

"We are headed toward home," replied Jack in an effort to cheer his friend. "We'll be out of this in a little while, and then—good-by war and fights and Kaiser and all for one good, long time!"

"We're a long ways from Tipperary yet, boys. Don't crow too soon," advised Harry, as he trained the glasses on the approaching planes.

"What can you see, Harry?" asked Ned,

giving his attention to the levers. "Are they still heading toward us?"

"That's just what they're doing!" declared Harry. "They're coming fast, too. Can't we coax a little more speed out of this old tub?"

"You speak as if this were a ship in the water," responded Ned. "I want you to understand that this is an aeroplane and that it is performing a most remarkable feat in carrying five boys and two grown men, besides a quantity of luggage and supplies."

"I guess our ideas were all right, eh, Ned?" said Jack, as he ran an admiring eye over the rigging of the craft. "It's some boat!"

"It certainly is some boat!" declared Ned. "And I wish—"

What Ned wished was never known, for at that instant a sharp report was heard and a bullet sang its way through the rigging of the Eagle with a vicious twang that made the boys wince.

"Wow!" was Jack's ejaculation. "That's too close for comfort!"

"May I reply to them?" asked Dave, picking up one of the German rifles that had been brought aboard. "I think I can get the range."

"I'd rather not shoot too close to them," Ned answered, manipulating the levers and valves in an effort to obtain more speed. "Per-

haps we can run away from both. In that case we won't have to shoot any one."

"I think I'll take a crack at their propellor," announced Dave. "Maybe I can send a bullet through that, and if I can it will stop them."

As he spoke Dave took a quick sight, resting the rifle across the rim of the fuselage. A sharp detonation echoed above the hum of the motors. Dave peered eagerly toward the plane at which he had aimed.

"I got 'em, I got 'em!" he announced, slapping his thigh in glee.

"Who did you get?" asked Ned, without turning his head.

"I am sure I winged their propellor!" declared Dave, gleefully. "I aimed right at the circle in which the blades travel, and I'm sure I saw splinters from the wooden blades. They're slowing up, too!"

"Sure enough!" cried Harry, peering through the glasses. "You're some shot, Dave. I'll place all my bets on you hereafter!"

"But the other fellow is hot after us!" was Jack's announcement.

"Where are they? And what are they doing?" asked Ned.

"They're coming up fast from the left," said Jack. "I think they're trying to get over us so as to drop a bomb or so."

"I wish we didn't have these two prisoners with us!" Ned said, as he urged the Eagle to her best paces. It takes a lot of power to keep up at this altitude when we're carrying so much weight."

"We'll make out all right," responded Jack, encouragingly. "We can take them along with us and when get across the French lines we'll just dump them down as prisoners of war and let them be exchanged."

"That would be a pretty good scheme," commented Harry. "The only thing I can see to interfere with it is that fellow on our left."

"He won't be able to do much when Dave gets in his work with the rifle again," cried Jimmie, admiringly. "Dave's the boy!"

"That was a lucky shot, though," protested Dave. "Don't expect every one to do as much execution as that one did."

"We'll have to take a chance, that's all!" urged Jimmie. "We won't let a little thing like that keep us from trying to make a landing."

"Perhaps not," went on Harry, "but at the same time it is a possibility and must be considered. Besides," he added, "we're not free from that fellow over here on our left yet. He's rising."

"Is he going over us?" asked Ned, anx-

iously. "I can't get much more speed out of this craft the way we're loaded."

"Yes," replied Harry, training his glasses aloft. "He is trying to pass above us. Perhaps he'll drop a bomb on us."

"That's exactly what he's trying to do!" declared Jack. "What can we do to prevent him? Dave, how about another shot?"

"I'll try," answered the boy, "but I'm not sure. There's considerable vibration here, you know, and I haven't a rest."

Presently he saw that unless he fired soon the other would be out of reach, and taking a chance discharged the rifle. As he had anticipated, the bullet went wild and resulted in no damage. Before he could reload and again take aim the other had passed to a point where the upper planes of the Eagle shut off his view.

"Now they'll be able to bombard us to their own pleasure!" declared Jimmie. "Gee, I wish I could climb up above this top plane and take a little crack at them myself! Can't I get up there?"

"None of that, Jimmie!" ordered Ned. "We have already all the danger we can handle without trying such a stunt as that!"

"All right, then, but it would be well to alter our course a bit."

"Here goes!" announced Ned, throwing his

weight against one of the levers controlling the horizontal rudders. "Stand by for a jerk!"

Scarcely had the Eagle swerved sharply from her course before the lads heard a rushing, whistling sound. Far below on the ground a missle fell. A dull boom came up. A cloud of smoke rising from the spot indicated that the missle had been a bomb remarkably well aimed. They realized that only by a narrow margin had it missed them.

"Plenty close enough," gritted Jimmie between his teeth. "Rise, if you can, Ned, and give us a chance at them with our guns."

From his seat Ned glanced quickly downward and observed the cloud of smoke about the spot where the bomb had landed.

"Give them another one, Dave," he cried, righting the Eagle and altering the rudders so as to drive the machine higher.

Without waiting for further instructions, Dave seized his rifle again and began firing as rapidly as he could load.

"We're getting over the French trenches now!" cried Harry in a moment. "I can see the puffs of smoke from their guns, and the bursting shells mean that the Germans are getting the range."

"Then we haven't far to go before we are going to be able to land."

"If we can hold this fellow off a while longer we'll be all right."

"Can you see any place, Harry, that looks like a landing place?" asked Ned, anxiously. "We better look for a good spot pretty soon."

Harry turned the glasses to look forward. He swept the horizon with eagerness. Presently he fixed his gaze upon one spot.

"I see another plane coming out to give battle to us and this chap!"

"Look out!" shrieked Jimmie. "See what Fritz is doing!"

The next instant he had thrown himself forward and over the edge.

CHAPTER XXV

ESCAPE

A gasp rose from the four boys as they saw Fritz hurl himself over the rim of the car. They knew that nothing could be done, yet all threw themselves toward the Uhlan in the vain hope of rescue.

It needed little exercise of the imagination to picture the result of Fritz's rash act. Too well the boys understood what would happen when the soldier fell from such an altitude.

"Good night!" gasped Jimmie, turning a pale face toward his friends.

"How did he do it?" asked Jack, a tremble in his voice.

"He must have been an acrobat of the first water to manage such a thing!" declared Harry. "I thought he was as secure as anything."

"Too late now to help him, and we've still got the German aeroplane to reckon with," warned Ned. "Keep a sharp lookout for the fellow!"

"What is the stranger doing now?" asked

Jack, pointing to the plane that had appeared from the westward.

"He seems to be heading directly for us," replied Ned. "I wonder if he takes us to be Germans, trying some trick or other."

"Better take off these German uniforms," advised Jimmie, stripping off his jacket as he spoke. "I'm going to drop mine overboard!"

As he spoke the lad flung the jacket as far as he could and watched its descent with interest. The others were not long in following his example.

"I'll tell you what we'll do!" offered Dave. "When we get near enough, shut off the engine so it won't make any noise and we'll all shout 'Vive la France!' at him. He'll know then we're not enemies."

"Good idea, but I can't speak French," returned Jimmie.

"Well, then, try something!" urged the lad.

"I don't believe anything at all is necessary," stated Ned as the two came nearer. "They seem to be after the Germans and not us!"

"What's that place down there?" asked Harry after some time. "It looks to me as if it were a camp of some sort. I see several tents."

"That's an aviation camp just like the one

we saw when we came through France and gave General Joffre his fast ride!" declared Jimmie.

"Sure enough!" declared Ned. "They have painted the tops of the wings that peculiar color so that they cannot be readily seen from an enemy air craft. That's rather a good idea, too!"

With scarcely a bump the Eagle settled to the earth and was at once surrounded by French soldiers, some garbed in the well-known suits and helments of aviators, others dressed as ordinary infantrymen, while still others wore greasy overalls and jumpers.

The language used was French, and they were at a loss to know what their questions meant.

"You'll have to talk United States!" declared Jimmie, rising and holding up a hand for attention. "We can't understand that stuff."

"Ah, so you speak English?" questioned one of the men.

All five boys gathered about their prisoner as he stood beside the Eagle.

As the lads looked at the newcomer they saw a short, broad shouldered man wearing a white moustache. The figure looked strangely familar.

"Do you recognize that man, Jimmie?" asked Ned.

Jimmie's answer was lost in the roar of exhaust from one of the other aeroplanes parked nearby. All turned in amazement at the noise. With a rush the French plane swept by the group and began soaring into the air. One glance showed the lads that Otto was at the levers.

During the brief moment that their attention had been diverted, the Uhlan had taken advantage of their preoccupation and had silently stolen away to the machine whose engine had been left running. Now he was beyond recall, and in a short time would be again on the eastern side of the fighting line, where he would no doubt join his regiment.

Chagrined, the lads looked at each other with crestfallen glances.

As the clamor of the other motor died into a steady drone they turned to look again at the advancing figure.

"Why, that's General Joffre!" gasped Jimmie. "Hope he don't recognize us. I feel too cheap for anything!"

"I think I have seen these young men before," he began cordially. "You are the young men who were of so much assistance to me at one time."

"Thank you, General," replied Ned. "We are glad to see you again."

"And what can I do for you in return for that kindness?" asked the general without going into the details of the event with which those of our readers who have read the previous volumes of this series are already familiar. "If there is anything I can do, please command me."

"We'd only like safe conduct to some seaport, sir," answered Ned, "where we can take passage to the United States. We want to get home!"

"That can be arranged, I am sure!" stated the general, heartily. "But you must be rather hungry. Will you not step into the tent here and have some lunch? You can tell me of your adventures while you eat."

There they related to the general and some of his aides the incidents leading up to their flight of that morning, not omitting to tell of their neglect to retain the prisoner they had so strangely brought to camp.

As they finished, the general said, as he looked at Jimmie:

"And so the Germans are rushing train loads of soldiers to the front, are they? And are they bringing any guns?"

"They're bringing lots of troops," replied

Jimmie, "but I didn't see any big guns. They've got some trains of ammunition on the way."

"Thanks!" acknowledged General Joffre. "That news is important!"

"Great Frozen Hot Boxes!" cried Jimmie, rising. "There I've gone and given away a lot of perfectly good information! And all the time I said I was going to remain perfectly neutral! Just my luck!"

"But at least," continued the general, "you have your packet and will be glad to return to your home so that you may carry out the wishes of your acquaintance who was responsible for so many of your adventures. Besides, you didn't intend to tell me anything, did you?"

"If you would consider selling your airship we would like to purchase it," the general said, turning again to Ned. "It appears to be a fine machine and I think we could use it to advantage."

"You are very kind, sir. We will be glad to sell it if you wish."

In a short time, details of the purchase had been arranged and the boys were on their way toward Havre, where they were to take boat for the United States. As they left the camp

they gave three rousing cheers for General Joffre and swung their caps in farewell.

As the camp was left behind, Dave turned to his companions with grateful thanks for their kindnesses to him.

"Oh, pshaw!" declared Jimmie. "Don't say a word about that! You did as much for us as we did for you. Now we're headed for home again let's forget all about how we served under the Enemy and how the Forces escaped!"

"Just the same, I'll have a lot to tell the members of my Patrol when I get back to Vancouver!" declared Dave, earnestly. "I'm glad I had the chance to meet with the Black Bears and Wolves!"

"And I hope that the next time you meet any of the Bears and Wolves you won't have to come over here and meet them while they are in the German army," put in Ned. "Hereafter I'm going to be like Jimmie. I'm going to be neutral if I have to fight for it!"

THE END